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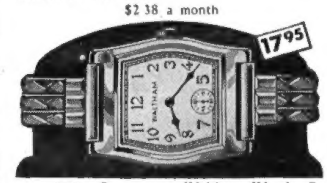

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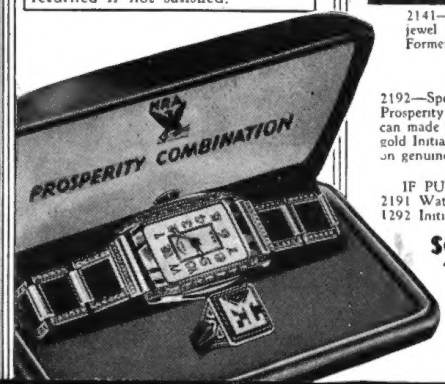

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Volume 89, No. 5 **Twice A Month**

October 1st, 1934

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The only law officer in that pearl lagoon got drunk, and drowned. The schooners—American, German, French, Japanese, Dutch, Australian—were already fighting with every weapon that had a trigger, or a cutting edge, or could be clubbed or thrown—when fate dumped a greater fortune into their midst. This is a story that would make the League of Nations feel limp.

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LAGOON LOOT

A Novelette by WESTON MARTYR

THE table in the starboard forward corner of the *Niagara's* smoking-room was the place to make for after dinner. I here met a Puisne Judge, a Brigadier-General, a Professor from Cambridge (Mass.), a Younger Brother of Trinity, the High Commissioner of a Territory larger than Ireland and the most eminent oceanographer in the world, bar two. To say nothing of the little missionary.

The talk in the corner was about the League of Nations. The Professor was an earnest advocate of the League. In his view, indeed, it was "the last hope of our civilization." The Judge was inclined to agree with him; but he thought the League must tend inevitably to become the instrument of its strongest member, and the Trinity Brother asserted that this was what the League had already become. The Scientist admitted the danger; but the General pointed out that man, being a perverse beast, the only way to make him behave himself was to use brute force; while the High Commissioner agreed with the soldier.

"What do you think about it, Padre?" asked the Judge presently. "Can *you* enlighten us?"

"I can try, Judge," replied the little missionary, turning pink and looking round the table with a bashful smile. "If I may, I will tell you something that happened while I was stationed at Maluit which seems to me to have some bearing on what we are talking about.

"Maluit, you know, is a typical low island. The lagoon is nearly twenty miles long; but there isn't much dry land, because the atoll is mostly reef awash. The whole place supported barely one hundred souls, of mixed Polynesian and Melanesian origin, and the latter strain predominated, which made them— Well, they were rather difficult people to—enlighten, Judge. The only other white resident on the island besides myself was a—a polygamous creature, Lechavre by name. He was really the local trader, but he held some sort of commission from the French Government which placed him in a position of authority in the island. Lechavre was not a congenial companion, and it would have been lonely for me on Maluit but

The German with the bleeding head speared with a boat-hook. Schoolmaster and Nicolet were slashing at each other with oars. The Japanese rowed their boat right into the tangle. There was a loud crack.

for my work. For two years out of three the island was practically cut off from the rest of the world. During those two years a schooner would call every nine months or so and load what little copra the island produced; but for two months every third year the place suddenly woke up and became a veritable metropolis.

"I have actually seen as many as six schooners of different nationalities anchored in the lagoon at once. You see, there was shell in our lagoon. Pearl shell. The beds, though, were preserved, by decree of the French Government. For two years the beds lay fallow, but during the third year diving was permitted for a season. It was a wise regulation, as indiscriminate diving in former times had resulted in the lagoon being fished nearly clean.

"The occurrences I am trying to tell you of happened during my last year on the island. It was one of the years during which diving was permitted, and it was then that the six schooners I mentioned gathered in our lagoon. The *Eugénie* was the first vessel to descend upon us. She was a French schooner, and our first touch with the outside world for nearly ten months. And you may perhaps imagine what her appearance meant. The trade wind was very light, and the schooner could not get in until next morning, but we spent all day standing on the windward beach, every living soul on the island eagerly watching that—that little bit of the outside world slowly coming to us and wondering what it would bring.

"Well, the *Eugénie* brought the usual cargo. Cheap cotton prints, tinned meat, scented soap, and also a lot of potato spirit disguised as gin. She brought me a deal of trouble, and she brought death, too. Lechavre boarded the schooner as soon as she let go her anchor, and he remained on board, drinking heavily, I understand, for two days and a night. Then he decided to swim ashore, I suppose, or it may have been some drunken frolic. In any case, he jumped overboard, and he was dead before they fished him out. A bad business and a bad end to our official representative of law and order.

"Nicolet, the *Eugénie's* Captain, was

not a nice man. He called me a sacred heretic, and spat at me when I went next day to see if I could be of assistance at the burial. Nicolet was drunk, and I have a picture of him in my mind as he furiously clawed up lumps of coral from his dead compatriot's grave and flung them at me.

"A few days afterwards the American schooner *Californian* arrived. Her Captain, bearing the strange name of Schoolmaster, was a stern sour looking man, who regarded me with disfavor as soon as he saw me, and with dislike when he found I was not in a position to help him in his business.

"'See here,' says he, 'I called in fer shell. The boss Frog's passed in his check, but I guess you've got your hooks into things on shore all right. If you can get me the stuff, say so, and we'll do a deal. And if you can't, I'll tell you plain I ain't got no use for hot gospellers.' Not an amiable individual, you perceive.

"THE diving season at Maluit opened officially on the 1st of October, and four other schooners sailed in around and about that date. The *Champion* arrived in the last week of September, and her Captain, Payne, an Australian, was annoyed to find the *Eugénie* and *Californian* already hard at work. With the Resident out of the way, you see, those men had seen no reason to postpone their operations until the official opening date. Those two had been very busy skimming the cream off the lagoon, and Payne, of course, was vexed.

"He told Schoolmaster and Nicolet exactly what he thought of them. I heard him doing it, and I was not surprised when Schoolmaster flung a bottle at him, but I had to interfere when the Frenchman drew his knife."

"Ah! You did, did you?" said the Trinity Brother. "I see. You interfered. Would you mind telling us, Padre, exactly how you—interfered?"

"I caught hold of his hand—the hand that held the knife, of course. He seemed surprised, and stared at me with his mouth open like a fish. But in a little he let me take the knife," replied the missionary. "Then he walked away, and the others went too. Nobody said anything. They just went away and got aboard their schooners.

"It was a happy ending to what, I assure you, might possibly have been a most serious affair. I was not at all comfortable about that business, though. Those three men had a grudge against each other. They were all what we call on the beach, Professor, hard cases, and I knew the trouble between them might break out again at any time. The knowledge alarmed me, and I was very glad when the other vessels arrived. One was a Japanese, the *Sagama Maru*, with a big crew aboard, and another a large German ketch, the *Frederick Obrist*. But when I met Lentsch, the Dutch Captain of the *Hollandia*, I felt that there was a good man come at last to Maluit.

"Lentsch was a large and jovial fellow. He seemed glad to see me when I boarded his schooner and introduced myself. And those of you who know the Islands will understand I found this sort of treatment of a missionary by a trading skipper both surprising and pleasing. That Dutchman was more than kind. He made me feel at home aboard the *Hollandia*. He gave me the first decent meal I had eaten for nearly three years, and I think it is natural I should have warmed to the man. I told him of Lechavre's death and the trouble between the other Captains. And I said I feared the trouble was by no means at an end.

"You see, I was worried. There was the lagoon with only a limited amount of valuable shell in the beds; there were the crews of six vessels, all naturally determined to get hold of as much shell as they could—and no one in authority to see fair play and keep the peace. But that Dutchman refused to be worried.

He laughed at my fears. He said he proposed to work, not to look for trouble. And if the other fellows made trouble they were welcome to it as far as he was concerned.

"He said, 'If they make too much trouble, then I go. I clear out. I am not afraid, but all the shell in Maluit is not worth losing my life.' Yes. Lentsch was a wise man, according to his lights. But there *is* such a thing as one's duty—and he disappointed me, I must say."

"I don't quite understand," interrupted the Commissioner. "Unless—was your disappointment caused by the man's refusal to help you?"

"Yes. It was," replied the missionary.

"Ah! I see," said the Commissioner, looking round at the others and slowly nodding his head. "Our friend admits he asked for help. And what did he want help for? He doesn't tell us; but it's plain enough, I think. He'd made up his mind that, if trouble occurred, he'd got to stop it. And I ask you to consider the sort of trouble he proposed to stop. I gather there were three—three wolves in that lagoon already. To say nothing of those Japs and the Germans. What sort of men were they, Padre?"

"My dear sir!" exclaimed the little missionary. "I assure you you credit me with far worthier intentions than I really had. The truth is I did not know *what* to do. I had no idea at all then that the Japanese were going to act as they did. And as for the Germans, I hoped they might be a decided influence for good. I was wrong, as it turned out. But I did not know that when I talked with Lentsch.

"Well, I was right about the trouble. It soon began. The Germans located a rich patch of shell. They should have been left alone to work their find in peace. They had taken the trouble to prospect the bottom of the lagoon in their small boat with a sea telescope—a sort of glass bucket, Professor, which enables one to see the bottom clearly from the surface. The Germans deserved what they had discovered; but as soon as Nicolet noticed the amount of shell they were lifting he tried to send his divers down in the same place.

"The *Obrist's* people very naturally protested, but it takes more than a protest to stop a ruffian like Nicolet. He tried to stove in the bottom of the German's boat with a boat-hook, and somebody knocked him overboard with an oar. Schoolmaster sailed the *Californian* right into the middle of the mess, let go a kedge and sent his divers over direct from his schooner's deck. Then he threw some empty bottles overboard, and began to shoot at them with his revolver. He was a good shot, and he hit the bottle he aimed at every time. The men in the small boats had stopped their scuffle and were sullenly watching this performance, when they noticed one of the bottles was drifting in their direction. And Schoolmaster was apparently unable to hit this particular bottle. He was shooting yards over it, and the bottle drifted nearer and nearer to the boats all the time. They took the hint and rowed away to their schooners.

"Next morning Schoolmaster woke up to find the *Californian* adrift. Somebody had cut his kedge rope, and the *Champion* was moored right over the patch of shell, with two anchors out. And Payne was sitting on top of her cabin house cleaning a sawn-off double-barreled shotgun.

"THAT was the position when I intervened. You see, I knew that Schoolmaster was not at all the kind of man to accept a situation of that sort. Then there were the Germans, with a legitimate grievance. To say nothing of Nicolet. It may sound absurd to you, but I knew my men, and I tell you I feared blood might be shed over that ridiculous business. So I rowed off to the *Champion* to see what I could do.

"On the way out I sighted a sail in

the offing, coming in from sea, and the sight delighted me, because I knew she would at least create a diversion, and I thought it unlikely that Schoolmaster or any of the others would begin making trouble with the prospect of a strange ship arriving on the scene. Indeed, when I boarded the *Champion,* I found Payne had put aside his gun and was busy looking at the stranger through a long-glass. 'She's a three-masted schooner,' says he. 'Deep in the water and painted white. Do you know what she is?'

"I answered I hoped she was a French Government vessel, coming on a visit of inspection. Indeed, I did hope so; but I saw little chance of my hope being justified. The French do occasionally send a gunboat round their scattered possessions in the Pacific, but they had not considered Maluit worth a visit since I had been there. I think what I said made some impression on Payne, though, for presently he picked up his gun and took it below.

"The Trade was blowing fresh that morning and brought the stranger up fast, but by the time she was close enough for us to see that the flag on her mizzen-gaff was the French ensign, we began to have our doubts of her getting inside the lagoon that day. You see, it was nearly high water by then, and no vessel can hope to sail in through the entrance of the lagoon when the ebb tide is running strong. And I must tell you there is a peculiarity about the tides at Maluit.

"When the ebb begins, the water flows out through the main passage, but it also escapes over many low portions of the enclosing reef. When the tide falls a little more, however, the reef dries out, and then, of course, the only place for the water to ebb through is the main channel. At high water the tide in the entrance is slack. Then the ebb stream runs slowly for about an hour, after which it accelerates quite suddenly and pours out in a fierce torrent which is quite a sight to see.

"We watched the schooner coming on, and saw the ebb had commenced to run out by the time she reached the seaward end of the channel entrance. No man with a knowledge of the local conditions would have tried to get through then; but this Captain was obviously a stranger and he kept on.

"He had a leading wind, his vessel was stemming the current and he must have thought he was all right. I watched anxiously as the schooner crept slowly up the channel against the tide. She was three parts of the way through when she seemed to stop and even move astern a little. Either the wind had eased or the tide was running more strongly already, and Payne said, 'If he doesn't get in in five minutes, he's done.'

"I wanted to do something, but Payne said there was nothing to do. He said, 'All I can do is to signal he's standing into danger. And what's the good? He knows that now himself. And if he tries to turn he'll pile up inside two seconds.' Just then a squall came up astern, and the schooner began to forge ahead again, and she had actually reached the inside end of the channel when the ebb suddenly commenced to run in full strength.

"I think they tried to let go an anchor. I could see the men running on the fore-deck. But they were too late. And it would have been no good. Nothing they could do then would have saved them. That fierce sweep of tide just took the schooner and *threw* her on the reef. She took it nearly broadside on, and the water boiled up all along one side of her. Then she began to heel, and Payne cried out, 'By God, she's rolling right over!' And that is just what she did. She rolled right over—and was gone. As quick as that!

"The *Champion's* boat was alongside us, and we jumped into her and rowed hard; but before we had gone far Payne stopped us. And he was right, for we could do no good. No swimmer could hope to last more than a moment in that boiling torrent rushing through the

entrance, and if we had gone on our boat would have been caught there too and swept helplessly out to sea. It was a dreadful thing, but we could do absolutely nothing, and we had to wait three hours more before the tide slacked sufficiently to allow us to approach the place of the wreck.

"We found the schooner quite easily. We could see her in that clear water, lying on her starboard beam ends in five fathoms, with her bow jammed between two big coral-heads. Her port bilge was ripped open, and part of her cargo had spilled out through the hole on to the bottom. All three masts were broken off short at the deck, and her spars and sails, held by the rigging, trailed off in a tangle down-stream of her. And the hand at the wheel was still there. We could see him, thirty feet under water, with his legs jammed between the spokes and the deck.

"I don't remember when the other boats arrived on the scene, but Schoolmaster got there when we did, and the other schooners must have sent their boats very soon. The Japanese were the first to send a diver down. We watched him, sprawling for a moment over the heap of stuff that had spilled from the schooner's hold, and then the man came up and passed an ingot of tarnished, whitish metal into his boat. At the sight Payne cried out, *'By God, it's silver!'*—and clapped his hand to his mouth. Then he sprang up and stood there, crouched like a runner about to start a race. And it was the look on his face as he stared at the others and the clutch of his hand at his empty hip-pocket that told me hell, that very instant, had been let loose on Maluit.

"I was filled with a great distress and agitation at that sudden revelation—that sure knowledge, and I remember crying out again and again, 'Wait. It can't be silver. It *can't* be silver.' That, my friends, was the whole of my poor contribution to the situation. It was inadequate, pitifully inadequate. But it was all I could think of. And, of course, no one took any notice of me.

"I remember all the boats bumping and jostling together in an effort to get in position for diving above the wreck. I remember the splashes of divers going overboard and the crack on the back I got from an oar when the German's boat ran foul of us. I saw Payne's face of wrath as he unshipped the tiller and beat with that heavy piece of wood at the bald head of the German captain. That head ran suddenly with red, and the sight held me petrified—until a boat bumped into us on the other side, and I became aware of a great pain in my hand. I was holding on to our gunwale, it seems, and the other boat had squeezed my fingers. There was only one Japanese in her, and he was vainly trying to scull against the tide.

"It is queer how self-centred we all are. You would think, with that object lesson of the horrid results of strife and fury going on all round me, that I at least might have kept my temper. But no. Not a bit of it. I was furious, my friends, with that Japanese who had hurt me. I gave his boat a violent push, and she swung round and drifted away with the current. And I remember saying to myself that the rest of her greedy fools must have all dived overboard after those ingots, and now they'd have a long swim before they could get back. And serve them jolly well right! What do you think of that for a Christian sentiment?"

"Shocking, Padre," said the General. "You must be a very terrible fellow when roused. But go on. What happened next?"

"A WORRIED face in the water. A wet brown hand clutching the gunwale beside me and another hand holding up an ingot. Then a rush and a clatter in the boat, and Payne trying to wrench the ingot from the diver's hand. Payne's

fist crashing into those two flinching eyes, and the face sinking through the clear water and staining it with a little trail of cloudy red. That's what happened next. That's what I saw, and I fear I can never forget it.

"But similar things must have been happening in all the other boats, because when I looked up they were fighting all round me. The German with the bleeding head, I think, had gone berserk. He urged his boat towards us, and he foamed at the mouth and yelled as he speared at Payne with a boat-hook.

"There was murder in that man's face, Judge. I'd never seen that look before, but there was no mistaking it. He meant to kill Payne, and I thought he would do it. And I thought he would kill me, too, afterwards. It was a very strange sensation. I felt quite helpless.

"Then I saw Payne catch hold of the boat-hook and throw the ingot he still held in his hand full at the other man's face. And the German toppled forward, very slowly it seemed, and fell with a great clatter into the bottom of his boat. I remember feeling very glad.

"I remember seeing Schoolmaster and Nicolet slashing at each other with oars, and the Japanese attacked us. They rowed their boat, bows on, right into us, in the hope of stoving our boat in and sinking us. There was a loud crack, and we heeled over, and I thought we were going to upset.

"And then somebody must have hit me on the head, because I don't remember anything more until I found myself sitting on the *Champion's* deck, feeling a lump on my forehead which I assure you was twice the size of an egg. I was amazed at the size of that lump. It did not seem possible, and I was feeling it in a dazed way when Payne brought me to my senses by throwing a bucket of water over me. That was the first fight I have been in, General. And I hope it is the last. It was not pleasant."

"It never is," said the General. "But who won the fight, Padre?"

"No one, as far as I can see," answered the missionary. "Unless it was Lentsch. Payne said Lentsch was the only one who didn't fight. He stood off while the other boats were hard at it. He watched the tide drift the whole lot of us down the channel, and then he anchored his boat over the wreck and sent his divers down. He worked hard while the rest were fighting, and by the time the flood began to run strongly enough to drive his divers from the wreck he had managed to half fill his surf-boat with ingots.

"Lentsch was a clever man. He came on board the *Champion* when he saw I was there. He had a plan to stop more fighting, and he said I was the man who must help him. He told us the wreck's cargo was not silver at all. One of his divers had salved the schooner's papers, and Lentsch showed them to Payne and me. She was the *Fraternité*, from Noumea for San Francisco, with 200 tons of refined nickel. Lentsch thought she had only called at Maluit for provisions or water. He said the value of the nickel was about £5 per ton, or £1000 for the whole cargo.

"He pointed out that the whole lot of it was less valuable than a full cargo of shell and not worth fighting about. His proposal was that I should put these facts before all the captains and show them it would be to their advantage to go ahead with their proper business, which was diving for shell, rather than bother about salving the nickel, much less fighting for it. And as for him, Lentsch, he said he did not care to compete or fight with the others for the shell in the lagoon. So he would be content if they left him in peace to salve the nickel and take his chance of getting what he could for his trouble out of the French authorities at Papeete. He thought that, as salvor, he might be granted one-third of the value of the

nickel—that is, a little over £300 in all.

"Now this sounded very reasonable to me, and I agreed at once to do as Lentsch suggested. It was clearly my duty to stop any recurrence of the fighting, and what better way could there be of preventing it than by showing those men the thing they were striving for was not worth the trouble, to say nothing of bloodshed.

"I asked Payne then and there if he would agree, but that man just laughed at me. He said, to use his own words, he would see me damned before he stood by and let any dirty Dutchman get away with £1000 as easily as all that. He called Lentsch to his face a swindling squarehead. He told me if I believed Lentsch when he said he was going to take the nickel to Tahiti as salvage, then I was a bigger fool than he thought. According to Payne, Lentsch meant to steal that 200 tons of nickel; to sail off with it and sell the whole lot! I did my best to make Payne see reason, but he would not listen to me. His last words were, 'I mean to get my whack of that nickel, as much as I can get. And if anyone tries to stop me, that man's going to get hurt.' Payne, you see, was a thorough ruffian. It is difficult to move that sort, General, with anything less than brute force. So, as neither Lentsch nor I were fighting men exactly, we had to give Payne up for the time.

"We got into Lentsch's boat and boarded the *Eugénie*, but we found Nicolet a harder nut to crack even than Payne. He had less sense and more ferocity. He seemed to think, because the *Fraternité* was a French ship, wrecked on a French island, that he, a Frenchman, was therefore the only person there with any right to—to pick her bones. To salve her cargo was how Nicolet put it; but—I wonder. It seemed to me mere salvage, with its comparatively moderate reward, was far too pure a motive to prompt any action a man like Nicolet might take.

"I was shocked by Payne's opinion of Lentsch, but I found it very easy to believe that Nicolet would steal the *Fraternité's* cargo as soon as look at it. In any case, he meant to get hold of it—all of it, by fair means or foul. He made *that* clear enough. And he emphasized the strength of his intentions by such a show of violence that I was glad to escape from the *Eugénie* with no more than one blow from his fist in my face. Lentsch was not so lucky. Nicolet kicked him, literally, into his boat, and we were a rueful couple, I assure you, and without much hope of success, when we boarded the *Californian* to put our plan before Schoolmaster.

"I expect you will laugh when I tell you that shrewd Yankee very soon blew us and our plan sky-high. Lentsch did the talking, and Schoolmaster heard him through. Then he said, 'Yes, it's a great scheme—if only I was a big enough mug to fall for it. *As if I didn't know nickel was worth $1000 a ton.*'

"And then he called Lentsch such dreadful names I feared he would rise up and strike him. But he didn't. Lentsch just sat there and smiled a sickly grin, while Schoolmaster made it plain to me that my amiable Dutchman was nothing but a swindling rogue who had made me his credulous dupe. For that was just what I was. And when I realized I had been doing my level best to help that crafty fellow steal away without any trouble with £40,000 worth of stuff that did not belong to him, I was so ashamed and angry and disgusted that I hailed my boat and went ashore, and I made up my mind to abandon all those wicked men to their lawless devices. Yes, Judge, I did. But it is not a thing to smile at really. Because I ran away from my plain duty. I admit it. But I had had all I could bear that day.

"NEXT morning I saw all six schooners moored inside the lagoon on either hand of the entrance and as near the

wreck as they could get without danger of the tide through the channel causing them to drag their anchors. I watched and wondered what would happen next. Presently, when the flood tide began to slack, I saw a boat put off from each schooner and row towards the wreck. I could not see the details of what followed because the boats were perhaps as much as half a mile from me, but I saw the divers go overboard and for a little all was quiet. Then there was a sudden burst of shouting and some commotion, and a boat rowed back to the *Hollandia*.

"The next moment I was horrified to hear the sound of a shot, and soon two boats pulled away from the rest and made for the *Sagama Maru* and the *Champion*. For half an hour nothing happened that I could see, and I was thinking that the ebb tide would begin to run soon and cause the remaining boats to leave the wreck, when I noticed the *Eugénie's* boat returning. I saw Nicolet scramble out of her, and in a moment he appeared on the schooner's deck with a gun and began to fire as hard as he could. He was shooting at the two boats still working at the wreck, and they moved off immediately and, fetching a big circle, they eventually reached the *Californian* and the *Frederick Obrist*. Then shots began to come from the *Californian*, Schoolmaster firing back at Nicolet, I supposed. Then the ebb began to run and swung the schooners at their anchors, and the shooting stopped."

"An indecisive action, by the sound of it," remarked the General. "Did any of the brutes get hurt?"

"Payne got a knife through his forearm, from the Japanese I told you about, whom he had nearly drowned the day before. The Jap himself got a bullet-hole through both cheeks and a lot of his teeth blown out. Payne did that for him. Schoolmaster had broken the arm of one of Nicolet's divers, and Nicolet had shot one of Schoolmaster's boys in the foot. I went round the schooners doing what I could for the wounded. It was a pretty mess, and it took me all the morning trying to clean it up. I have had some little medical training, fortunately, and I was glad I was able to make those men fairly comfortable. All except Nicolet's unfortunate diver, that is. For that Frenchman was either mad or drunk, and he threatened to shoot anyone who came near the *Eugénie*. He actually did shoot at me twice."

"That man was nothing more than a savage beast," exclaimed the Professor. "But why shoot at *you*?"

"Well, I was very concerned about the poor fellow with the broken arm," replied the missionary. "I tried hard to get to him aboard the *Eugénie*, but both times Nicolet shot at me. I tell you he was mad drunk."

"Ho! What d'you give a man who rescues wounded under fire, General?" asked the Trinity Brother.

"V. C. if he's lucky," replied the General. "Go on, Padre."

"Oh, dear! I haven't—I haven't been —boasting," cried the little man, visibly distressed at the thought. "I assure you, my dear fellows, I had no such—I had no idea. Believe me, I—"

"You go on with your yarn, Padre," said the Commissioner. "You *haven't* been boasting. You can believe me. You don't know how. But mind you tell us the whole story now. Don't you dare keep anything back! You say that Frenchman scared you away. Well—what happened next?"

"Nothing happened, until the turn of the tide in the evening," continued the missionary. "You see, it was only during slack water that the divers could get at the wreck. That gave them little enough time, and you would have thought they might agree to make the best use of it. But no. Those men were worse than dogs in a manger.

"As soon as the others put off in their boats Nicolet began to fire at them.

Payne and Schoolmaster joined in too, or perhaps they were only firing at the *Eugénie*. In any case, there was a deal of indiscriminate shooting all round, no one dared go near the wreck in consequence and not a single ingot was recovered by anybody that tide. It is difficult to believe grown men could be such asses, but I assure you I am telling you exactly what occurred. The darkness put an end to that silliness.

"The next two days were quiet, and they all lay aboard their schooners, nobody daring to make a move. But in the interval Payne and Schoolmaster had put their heads together. They joined forces, and in the middle of the night they stole aboard the *Eugénie* and took Nicolet by surprise. The *Eugénie*, like all the other schooners, had a purely native crew, and they did not show any fight. Fighting between the Captains was not their business. They ran below, and stayed there while Payne and Schoolmaster attended to Nicolet on deck. Nicolet got badly manhandled. They tied him up and then searched the schooner, and when they left they had drawn the Frenchman's teeth. They took Nicolet's gun and revolver, all his ammunition and all the liquor in the ship. I was pleased when I heard that.

"I thought that might be the end of it; but, will you believe me, it merely made things worse! With Nicolet out of action, Payne and Schoolmaster thought they could do as they liked. They sent their boats to the wreck next day, and when the Japanese and Germans followed they found themselves under fire from the *Champion* and *Californian*. So they had to turn back. Then *they* opened fire on the *Californian's* and *Champion's* boats working at the wreck, and the men in them naturally drew off at once. So there those fools were again. Everyone afraid to go near the wreck and nobody better off than before.

"This state of affairs lasted nearly a week. All that time I had done nothing. I had not interfered. As I say, I had made up my mind to wash my hands of the whole business. But when Lentsch came ashore to tell me the Japanese and Germans had asked him to join them in an attack on Payne and Schoolmaster, then I knew something must be done at once. I had to stop this if I could, for it was serious. Heaven knows it had all been bad enough up to then, but so far, you must understand, it was only the Captains who had actually been fighting. They had been doing a lot of shooting, one way and another; but, with the possible exception of Nicolet, I am sure none of those skippers had really been shooting to kill. If they *had* been—well, somebody would have been killed by that time. They had only been firing, I think, as a threat—a warning. 'Keep your boats away from those ingots, or look out!' That sort of thing.

"But I knew if the Germans, and especially the Japanese, really got their blood up, it would be quite another story. The *Sagama Maru* was not manned like the other schooners, you see—with a white skipper and a native crew. She had a Japanese Captain, of course, *and a Japanese crew*. Ten of them; and they would all fight if it came to it. Also the *Obrist* had two Germans aboard besides their skipper, whose head Payne had broken. There were terrible possibilities in the new situation, and I set off to visit the schooners at once.

"I went off, this time, with a plan in my head which I had been cogitating over for some days. I boarded the *Obrist* first, and found Nakagawa, the Japanese skipper, and the three Germans with their heads together down in the cabin. I told them at once I knew what they proposed to do, and I advised them to listen to reason. I said Payne and Schoolmaster would certainly be ready for them, and that Payne had a double-barreled gun with plenty of buckshot cartridges, and they knew al-

ready what a dead shot Schoolmaster was with his pistol. I said if they fought they might possibly win, owing to their numbers, but it was certain some of them would be killed. And as things were, they might have to kill both Payne and Schoolmaster before they could get hold of the nickel. And, supposing they got the nickel, what were they going to do then? How did they think they were going to dispose of it?

"You see, I understood perfectly by that time that none of those men thought of merely salving that nickel. They meant to steal it if they could, but that was a thing I feared I could not stop, and my only aim was to prevent murder being done. I told them honest salvage was one thing, and so was theft —but piracy with murder was quite another matter, and once men were killed over the business, the rest of them would never dare to show their faces in a civilized port, let alone sell £40,000 worth of stolen nickel there. That was the plain obvious truth, and they realized it. I could see it. It shook them.

"So I went ahead. I said, if they had any sense at all in their thick heads they would see the only possible way for any of them to profit was to work together and share and share alike; for, obviously, any man who was refused a share would give the game away and inform the authorities at the first opportunity. They saw that point too. They said what they had wanted to do all the time was to share the stuff, but first Nicolet and then the American and the Englishman had tried to get it all for themselves. Those men, they said, refused to let anyone go near the wreck; they had wounded one German and a Japanese, so now the only course left was to make a fight for it.

"NOW, here I am afraid I became a little artful. It was essential, you see, for the success of the plan I had in mind, that I should know exactly what firearms those men possessed. So I said if they fought they must not make too sure they would win. They must remember they would be fighting against well-armed men. They outnumbered the others, but could they hope to succeed when they had no firearms themselves? The German Captain immediately got up and produced, with a flourish, a revolver and an automatic pistol. He also made some bombastic remarks to the effect that, though they might have only two guns, yet it was the good German courage which would decide the fight. Nakagawa said he had only one gun aboard his ship, but, all the same he considered he was better armed than any of them, because his piece was a magazine rifle. This told me precisely what I wanted to know. They had only three firearms between them.

"I then asked them if, instead of fighting, they would agree to share the ingots equally between the schooners, supposing I could induce Payne and Schoolmaster to agree to the same thing. This led to a lot of silly talk and discussion with which I will not bore you; I gathered that they really would be very relieved to get hold of their share of the spoils without any fighting, but they could not trust the others not to play them some dirty trick. They feared being fired at suddenly in the middle of their diving.

"I asked them if they would feel safe if I could induce the other men to give up their firearms, and they replied that they would, of course, but it was absurd to suggest that Payne and Schoolmaster would ever give up their guns. I said I thought not, and that anyhow I would see what I could do. And with that I left them.

"I found Payne and Schoolmaster aboard the *Eugénie*. They were actually offering to give Nicolet back his firearms and his liquor if he would agree to join them against the Germans and Japanese. And I saw I was just in time,

because the prospect of getting some gin again was visibly proving too much for the Frenchman. I had no time to beat about the bush. I showed those men the grave danger they were in from an attack by superior numbers. It was thirteen men to two—or three, if they counted Nicolet. Personally, I said, I wouldn't count him. I should be afraid of getting shot in the back. I also pointed out that the other side, in my opinion, was more effectively armed.

"'How d'you make that out?' says Payne. 'We've got, all told, my gun, Schoolmaster's revolver and Nicolet's gun and revolver as well.' I told them what guns the others had. I said that Nakagawa alone could stand out of their range and pick them off one by one with his rifle if he wanted to. I said he meant to do it, too, if they forced him to it, but that he didn't want to fight. Nor did the Germans. I said, 'I've come from them to tell you they agree to share the *Fraternité's* cargo equally between the schooners, provided you agree to give up your guns to me.' Then I stated as a fact something that was only an assumption, but which, all the same, I was fairly sure about. I said, 'If you will agree to give up your arms, they will agree to give up theirs also.'"

"Aha!" exclaimed the Judge. "I begin to see a light. You ought to be on the Secretariat of the League, Padre. Those men refused, of course?"

"They laughed at the idea," went on the little missionary. "But I stuck to it. I repeated all the arguments I had used with the others about the impossibility of disposing of the nickel if murder were done. And so on. And I went further. I said they must not forget they had to reckon with *me*, an eye-witness of the whole proceedings. And I made it plain that if they killed a man, or shed any more blood, I would not rest nor leave any stone unturned until I had brought them to justice. After that they did not laugh at me."

"I'll say that was mighty brave of you," said the Professor. "You took a big risk telling those men that. It would have been easy for them to get rid of—the eye-witness."

"Nonsense!" replied the little missionary. "I *beg* your pardon, Professor, but I mean there was really very little risk. I fear my description of those men must have misled you. Payne and Schoolmaster were tough, but they were not cold-blooded murderers. Why! there was a photograph of Payne with his wife and five daughters stuck up on the cabin bulkhead. And Schoolmaster had two black cats and a parakeet aboard the schooner, which he wouldn't let anybody feed but himself. Now, men like that don't kill men like me, Professor.

"In any case, they didn't kill me. They did, in fact, exactly as I advised. They agreed to give up their guns to me, provided the others did the same. It took them a whole day to make up their foolish minds, but they did it. I helped them to their wise decision by telling them a white lie, which I think will be forgiven me. I told them a French gunboat was due to call in at Maluit. One may have been due, as far as I know, but not exactly—imminently. The French *do* send gunboats around their islands, you know, and all I did was to make this one's visit overdue. I told them Lechavre had expected her to arrive about the middle of the diving season. That settled it. They saw their chances of getting away with anything off the wreck were gone immediately any naval vessel turned up. And in the end they got so afraid they might be too late to make off with their ill-gotten gains if they didn't set to work diving immediately, that they actually finished by urging me to hurry on my—er—peace negotiations with the others.

"Nakagawa and the Germans were not quite so difficult to handle. I went alongside the *Obrist* with Nicolet's gun and revolver in my boat. These were

the first-fruits of my disarmament policy, and they were sent by Payne and Schoolmaster as a token of good faith. The German hesitated for an hour, and then handed me over his revolver. I rowed back for Payne's shot-gun, and the sight of it heartened Nakagawa to let me take his rifle. Those men were ludicrous and as suspicious of each other as a lot of snakes. The thing was laughable. Schoolmaster and the German were the only men now left with arms, and each refused to give his up before the other. I don't know how it would have ended if Payne had not suddenly taken Schoolmaster's pistol and thrown it into my boat.

"I loaded Payne's shot-gun as a precaution, and thus emboldened, I took the German's automatic from his reluctant hand. I didn't have to bother about the Dutchman. I knew the *Hollandia* had no firearms aboard, and anyway, Lentsch had announced his intention of sailing that very evening. He prophesied bad trouble, guns or no guns, as soon as the diving for the ingots began again, and he did not want to get his throat cut, or cut anyone else's, for that matter, with the prospect of a man-of-war dropping in at any moment. He said he'd lost too much time at Maluit already, and he proposed to clear out before he lost anything else. With so many bad men about he said he considered himself lucky not to have lost his schooner or his life.

"He sailed at half ebb, and the strong current quickly swept the schooner through the lagoon entrance. Very soon she was just a little speck far out at sea.

"As soon as the tide slacked the schooners sent their boats off to the wreck. I went off, too. I went to keep the peace. Armaments had successfully been abolished, Professor. I had dropped the firearms into the lagoon where no one could find them again. But I clung to Payne's sawn-off shot-gun, Commissioner, for precisely those reasons you so ably put forward this evening when you demonstrated the necessity for the League of Nations maintaining an international force of police.

"I made the men in the boats a little speech. I said there had got to be fair play and no more fighting, and that they must remember I was there to keep the peace. And I held up my gun. Payne and Schoolmaster burst out laughing. They jeered at me, and I knew that, now or never, I had to show them I meant what I said. So I told them I would far rather shoot a man than see all of them at each other's throats again. I said if they did not believe me they had better come at once and try to take my gun away. I said, 'God forbid I should kill anyone deliberately, and I mean to aim at your legs. But the shot from this gun scatters, and I'm not at all sure of my aim.'"

At this point the Professor interrupted the story by smacking the little missionary hard on the back and ejaculating something that sounded like "Hot damn." The High Commissioner cried out, "Good egg," and the words, "That's the stuff to give 'em," fell from the lips of the Puisne Judge. The General said, "Damme if I'd have believed it. Padre, how did they take that?"

"They looked surprised and they stopped laughing," the little man went on. "I think they must have understood I really was serious. They looked at me for a little without saying anything, and then Schoolmaster said, 'Well, hell, let's get on with it.' That seemed such a funny thing to say then that I remembered it. It broke the spell, though. Schoolmaster sent his divers overboard and the others followed. Soon they appeared again.

"Some of them brought up ingots in their hands, but I noticed the Germans had a better plan. Their men went down with baskets attached to the boat with lines. The divers filled the baskets on

the bottom and the men in the boat hauled them up. This meant the *Obrist* was getting a bigger share of the nickel than the others, and I was wondering if this fact might not cause trouble, when one diver after another reported that the hold of the wreck was already half-empty. This seemed so extraordinary that at first I did not believe it.

"To my knowledge no more than a ton or two of the nickel had been recovered from the wreck so far, and she had 200 tons aboard. But when I looked down at the wreck myself, I could see no sign of the pile of ingots which had spilled from the big hole in her side, and looking from above at the hole itself, it certainly appeared very black and empty. According to the divers there were ingots still piled at each end of the hold, but they judged a good half of the nickel had gone already. It was incredible. The tide could not have washed the stuff away, it was too heavy. The stuff must have been taken by someone; but who could have been diving at the wreck without the others knowing, when they had been watching each other all the time like a lot of lynxes?

"THIS was a question that was running in all their minds. I could see that easily enough. The five Skippers stood there in their boats, eyeing each other with open suspicion, and I knew that here was an ugly situation already arisen which would call for all my powers as a peacemaker. I said to them, 'Wait; let me adjust this thing. I will search all your schooners and, if I find the ingots, then you can divide them equally between you.'

"Then suddenly Schoolmaster began to curse himself and the rest of them for a pack of blind fools. Payne asked him what he meant, and he answered with a string of the foulest curses it has ever been my lot to hear. Then he shook his fist at the speck on the horizon which was the *Hollandia*. 'Done brown,' he cried. 'And by a damned Dutchman!' 'By God, you're right,' says Payne. 'And we might have known it. I *thought* she looked mighty deep in the water. And it's six hours before the tide turns and we can get after him! There isn't a hope.'

"Then he began to curse, too, and he was almost as fluent as Schoolmaster. When the truth dawned on them, the others made a great to-do, too—especially Nicolet. He danced in his boat with rage and fury. It was all rather funny, really, and I badly wanted to laugh, but thought it wise not too. And when I remembered that the *Hollandia* was the only schooner with a proper diving set aboard I thought I saw how Lentsch had managed his coup. This diving-set allowed him to do something the others could not do. They relied solely upon their skin divers—the diver's technical term for a naked man, Professor—whose powers of working under water are, of course, very limited. But a man working from the *Hollandia* in a diving-suit would find no difficulty in getting at the ingots in that shallow water. It would be a long job, because the work could only go on after dark and during slack water; but that was evidently what Lentsch had done. He had worked hard while the rest had been wasting their time fighting. My sympathies were with him. Lentsch was a shifty individual, but he did have brains in his head.

"I was glad when the tide put an end to the evening's proceedings. I'd had a hard day and I went home intending to go to bed. But I had no sleep that night. I had too many visitors. Schoolmaster was the first. He was after the gun. I had foreseen something like this might happen. As the possessor of that gun, the only firearm on the island, I realized my grave responsibility. I had to keep the peace amongst those men, and that gun was the only thing that

gave me the power to do it. So long as I was the only armed man on Maluit, all should be well; but if anyone else got hold of the gun, then Heaven help us all. I saw that clearly.

"And that was why, before I lay down, I cut a wedge and jammed it under my door, which had no lock. Schoolmaster must have come very quietly. But I woke when he tried the door, and I called out to know who was there. He did not reply for a little, and I think he was taken aback. Then he said he was sorry to wake me, and made some jocular remark or other. The man was trying to appear affable, which was not like him at all. Then he said he'd come for some quinine for one of his hands who was down with fever; but this only confirmed my suspicions. If one of his men did have fever, I could not see Schoolmaster bothering himself to come ashore after dark to get medicine for him. And where is the trading schooner in all those waters which does not carry some quinine aboard?

"So I said I could do nothing then, but would go off and see the sick man in the morning. At that Schoolmaster walked around to the window and looked in. My house, you see, was nothing but a wooden shed, and one side of it was practically all window, closed only by a reed screen. Schoolmaster pushed the screen aside and stood there with his hands upon the sill. There was a half moon, and it was light enough for me to see him, but I knew he could not see me where I lay on my cot not six feet from him. He did not say anything, and I kept quite still. For a minute, perhaps, we remained like that, and then it seemed to me that man was preparing to spring. I don't know, even now, if he was, or if it was only my imagination that made me afraid; but I thought his arms had altered their position and his attitude looked—tense.

"I felt for the gun, which lay on the matting beside me, and cocked both triggers. There were two soft clicks in the darkness. And no other sound. I think we were both holding our breath. Presently I heard Schoolmaster sigh. He backed away into the darkness and then he said, 'You're a hell and a half of a man of God, I reckon, who won't get out of his bed to help the sick.' Then he went away. I heard him walk off towards the beach, and I got up and watched him get his boat afloat and row away.

"My next visitor was Nicolet. But this time I was ready. I had thought it wise not to return to my bed. I was afraid to. So I lay down in a clump of pandanus near the house. I was very tired, and I thought I might safely go to sleep there, where no one would think of looking for me. But I found I could not sleep. I was too excited by what had occurred, and my mind was very busy.

"And there were noises out there under the trees. Little rustlings and creepings amongst the leaves. Landcrabs, I suppose, but I couldn't be sure. And there were the mosquitoes. I got, in fact, into a very nervous state. It was quite impossible to sleep, and when a coconut dropped with a crash from a palm quite near me, I jumped up with my heart pounding and only just stopped myself from firing at the thing. That will show you the state I was in by that time. And when I realized what a fool I had made of myself over a falling nut, I became angry. By that time all I wanted was to get under my net and go to sleep in peace, and it annoyed me greatly to think that this was quite impossible. And, what was worse, it would remain impossible until all those confounded schooners had finally sailed from the lagoon. I had goodness knows how many more days and nights of this sort of thing to go through with. The thought angered and irritated me intensely, and I remember telling myself what a fool I was to take all that risk and trouble merely to protect a lot of

ruffians from the results of their own stupid and blackguardly actions.

"Then it occurred to me that, though I might be acting from the best motives, yet what I was doing in reality was helping a gang of thieves to get safely away with about £20,000 worth of property that by no means belonged to them. I sat there sleepless and worried, eaten alive by mosquitoes and apprehensive of someone creeping on me in the dark. I got angrier and angrier with myself and with the whole business. I thought how stupid it was for me to have got myself into that mess. There I was deliberately risking my life in a ridiculous effort to prevent a crowd of thugs fighting amongst themselves. It would be a good thing, I thought, if only those beastly fellows did set upon each other like so many Kilkenny cats. A good riddance! A lot of dangerous thieves.

AND it dawned on me then that £20,000 was a tremendous amount of money. A truly enormous sum! What a vast amount of good could be accomplished if that money were only safe in good hands! If only our Mission funds, for instance, could be augmented by a sum like that! And here I was—*me*—doing my best to help those thieves steal it! And all the time it was in my power to stop them. I held the power to stop them—in my hands. I took up the gun and looked at it, my head full of the strangest and most exciting thoughts. £20,000! Supposing I refused to let those men steal it? *Supposing I insisted on getting my share.* . . .

"I suddenly saw the figure of a man outlined against the white front of my house. It was Nicolet. I recognized him at once by his movements and stealthy attitude. He moved with infinite precaution towards my door. I saw him open it very softly and creep inside. And suddenly a great rage and hate of that slinking murderous creature flamed up in me and—God forgive me—I raised my gun and fired point-blank. . . .

"And make no mistake about it: I shot to kill. You may judge—by what followed. The man yelled and rushed out through the door, and I fired at him again as he ran. He made for the beach, and I followed and tried to fire again. But, thank God, the gun was empty. . . .

"I don't remember what happened then, but I found myself standing on the beach, listening to the sound of that man's oars as he rowed away in panic. Then I began to tremble so much that I could not stand up. I sat down on the beach, and I was afraid, because the madness had fallen from me and I understood what I had tried to do.

"I won't try to describe what I thought about all the rest of that night. You may, perhaps, imagine. I went through —a bad time. I was distressed at what I had done—*and at what I might do.* I had lost control of myself. I had tried to kill a man, and I had been tempted by the thought of securing for myself a share in all that money. I was already no better than a thief in intention. I passed a bitter night, my friends. I prayed for guidance, for I did not know what to do. And with the dawn a light came to me. . . .

"I kept the gun, because I dare not trust those men. I took the cartridges and threw them, every one, far out into the breakers, because *I dare not trust myself.*"

The missionary sat upright in his chair and looked round at his friends with a little smile. "I find it a relief," said he, "to have made that confession. And now I see it's nearly midnight and I fear I have been talking tremendously. I hope I have not bored you with my story. It taught me a great lesson and I thought perhaps that you—I mean, it seemed to me to bear on what we were discussing. I apologize for monopolizing the conversation like this, though.

You must forgive me."

"But look here!" exclaimed the General. "That's all very well, but *that's* not the end of the story. What did those men do then? And what happened to the ingots? You can't leave us in suspense like this, Padre."

"There was no more suspense," said the little man. "There was no more trouble. They went on diving for the nickel, and I kept the peace with my empty gun. You see, they didn't know it was empty. And they must have thought, after the way I had handled Nicolet, that I meant business. So there was no more trouble at all. They cleaned out the wreck within a week, and they sailed away with their treasure. I was glad to see them go; I never heard anything more about any of them, and I don't know that I want to. I doubt if they came to any good. But their fate is unimportant, and my only purpose in telling you all this was for the sake of the light it seems to me to throw on the working, under stress, of the mind of men. It seems clear it is unwise to trust any of us. So, rub our noses in the dirt, General, until we sicken of dirt. Lighten our darkness, Professor. Hold up the torch. Proclaim the brotherhood of man, or, if you will, call it the League of Nations. Limit armaments. Abolish them forever, if you can. But never, never, *never* put absolute power into the hands of any mortal man."

Bottle Crosses Atlantic In A Year

An empty bottle crossed the Atlantic from the Rhode Island shore to the Azores in a few days less than a year. The distance is about 2000 miles. It was one of twelve jars set adrift from Westerly, R. I., and was returned from Port of Faji Grande, Island of Flores. The others have not been reported.

Gray splotches appeared on rocks. Jones grinned. "They're guessin'. I'll just put in the time havin' another snack."

JUST ANOTHER JONES

A Novelette

By ROBERT E. PINKERTON

CHAPTER I

GUNPOWDER GREETINGS

THE rider slouched wearily in the saddle. But he sang as he rode through the brush-banked, steep-walled canyon, sang old ballads born to the clatter of long, curving horns of milling Texas steers.

A bullet fanned his face and the roar of a gun drowned the song. The horse stopped. The rider turned.

"What you shootin' at?" he asked in mild wonder as he saw a movement in the thick brush.

His lean face expressed only a casual interest, though his gray eyes were steady and bright.

"That high C you was reachin' for," a voice sneered. "I come closer to it than you did, at that."

The rider grinned. "Try again," he suggested, and his clear tenor told of the dying cowboy on the lone prairie.

The gun roared. The rider felt his hat twitch, and was silent.

"Climb off that horse!" commanded the voice, suddenly harsh. "This side! Back to me. Unbuckle your gun belt. Drop it! Turn around and take six steps this way."

The singer obeyed each command.

"Where you headin' for?" the voice came.

"In the general direction of a meal."

"How you know you'd find it?"

"I was only hopin', after I hit this trail a way back."

"Stranger hereabouts?"

"Complete."

"Huh!" the man in the brush snorted. "And where you from?"

"Tellin' that would be a regular geography lesson. I was born in—"

"Where'd you work last?"

"The White River country."

"Who for?"

The questions were swift and sharp, like shots.

"The Lazy O."

"What you doin' in this—? Hey, you fresh jasper! How can an O be lazy? Another break like that and I'll fill your empty belly with lead. What's your name?"

"'Fraid you won't believe me, friend. It's Jones, Just Jones. I'm lucky, at that. My old man, he had queer notions. His first son he named Another Jones, and the second one he called Still Another Jones."

A small rock fell from a cliff above the brush, crashed, rolled.

"When I came along you'd think it had him stumped," Jones continued after the echoes had died away. "But he took one look at me, and I've been Just Another Jones ever since. Then the kid showed up, and the old man yelled 'Enough,' and that's what the kid was, and is—Enough Jones."

Just Jones ceased speaking. He had heard a slight rustle in the brush. Now there was silence. As he scratched an ear in perplexity, he became aware of the distant sound of horse's feet.

"Mister," Jones said, "would you be interested in my sisters' names?"

No answer. Jones tensed, turned, appraised the distance to his gun. The horse was closer, coming down the canyon. Jones took a step.

"No!"

It was a new voice, sharp as a gun's crack. Jones froze. At last he looked up to a wide ledge on the cliff whence he knew that voice had come.

Nothing happened, except that the sound of the approaching horse grew louder.

Jones stole a glance up the canyon. A piebald pony came around the straight rock wall at a bend in the canyon fifty yards away, was jerked to a savage halt when its rider saw Jones.

Then a gun spoke, a rifle this time, from the cliff. The rider pitched to the ground and the piebald wheeled and disappeared.

Calmly and deliberately, Jones shook tobacco into paper, caught the yellow string of the muslin sack between firm white teeth, rolled a cigarette—and waited.

Not a sound came to him. The man in the trail did not even twitch as he lay, spread-eagled. Just Jones lit his cigarette, took three leisurely puffs.

"All right, Jones, though your name's more likely Smith," came the voice from the cliff. "Pick up your gun and catch your horse. It's better if you go the way you came."

Jones started away, halted.

"Stranger," he said pleadingly, "have a heart. There's a lot o' sudden death in this canyon, I can see. But there's no grub the other way, and I'm going to die quick if I don't eat."

Silence answered that. Just Jones took two long drags at the cigarette.

"You gone and left me, too?" he complained. "I never saw a country to beat this. You *hombres* all so homely you don't dare show your faces? And such manners! Askin' a plumb stranger about moles in places he ain't even seen himself!"

"I've asked you nothing. I've only told you."

Jones took off his hat, studied it.

"And that other polite gentleman, nickin' the brim in front," he continued mournfully. "Now the rain'll run right down into my face, if it ever rains in this country. Sure you got nothin' to ask me? And where'd that question mark go to?"

Again no answer. Just Jones looked up at the cliff, searched the canyon walls, at last turned to pick up his gun. The

belt buckled on, he called softly to his horse, which had been grazing nearby.

"No place for gentle folks like us, Star," he said when the animal responded at once. "People here are unfriendly and even rude. The chief fun o' bein' a stranger is that nobody asks you questions. At least, nobody with manners or common sense."

He had spoken clearly, knew that his voice carried. Now he mounted, urged Star toward the dead man lying in the trail. Star danced, shied, snorted, but went closer in response to reins and knees.

"That's shootin', hoss!" Just Jones exclaimed with unfeigned admiration. "And a .30-30 slug into one side of the forehead and out the other is what makes doctors starve to death."

He studied the face of the dead man.

"Though if it had been me, now, I'd 'a' tried for that mole lower down. Just as sure, and more artistic. Leave us leave this place, Star hoss."

Star danced around the body and around the big rock, was pulled to a stop. Jones no longer slouched in the saddle but was tense as his gray eyes surveyed the scene.

A WELL worn trail came down the canyon. Cattle had made that trail, and many riders. To the left, the canyon wall rose in steep, bare hills, to the right in abrupt, brushy slopes broken by crags and great, split boulders.

A slight motion in the brush up there caught Jones' attention, and he looked quickly away. After a moment he threw himself from Star with an amazingly swift movement that carried his body to the shelter of a big rock.

A bullet bored the air a foot above the saddle.

"Move out o' range, Star," Jones said quietly. "That will be Mr. Question Mark and his belt gun. Accurate, but slow."

Star had found a bunch of sweet grass and refused to leave.

"Queer place, this canyon," Jones whispered to him. "Everybody seems to shoot at every other man he sees. With all the travel through it, there ought to be a pair o' boot toes pointin' skyward every ten rods. Well, if that's the custom hereabouts—"

His long Colt jerked, roared.

"Only what you might call a spur shot, Star," Jones grinned. "Can't kill a man just because he nicked my hat. And it sure spurred him."

Jones fired again in the general direction of waving brush on the steep canyon wall. The fleeing man burst into view in an opening. He was fairly hurling himself, quartering, down the slope, and soon, Jones knew, he had rounded the next shoulder.

Jones waited. Another man, with a rifle, was still somewhere above him, a man who shot swiftly, accurately and without warning.

A furious clatter of hoofs echoed in the canyon, from beyond the next turn. It grew fainter, died.

"That'll be Mr. Question Mark high-tailin' it out o' here," Jones said to his horse. "And that rock fallin' from the cliff was knocked loose accidental by the one with the rifle, tippin' off the nosey one below him. Neither could 'a' known tother was there, and Mr. Question Mark was so close to the cliff the man on the ledge couldn't see him gettin' away. That's all plain, but what's it mean?"

Jones scanned the cliffs, rocks and brush above him but failed to find movement.

"The *hombre* who stopped me was turnin' back anyone from below," he continued, "and the other was sure stoppin' anybody who came down. Of the two, I think he's the one we're lookin' for. Come here, Star."

He rose abruptly, slipped his Colt into its holster, walked to his horse, mounted, turned down the canyon. Star

snorted and danced around the dead man, onto the spot where Jones' singing had been interrupted, was halted there.

"Friend, enemy, or maybe neutral," Jones called. "I seek advice."

"Vamoos!" was the instant reply. "Pronto!"

"But this hole in my hat!" Jones protested. "And I'm proud o' my singin'."

"Listen, stranger, if you are one. Hell's goin' to be apoppin' right where you sit. You took two cracks at Pete Mongan around the turn, and missed both times. This is no place for a poor shot."

"He'll bring back a gang, eh?"

"Five, ten, maybe thirty."

Just Jones turned slowly in his saddle and inspected the walls of the canyon on both sides.

"You're fixed for a short while," he said judicially. "Long's water and grub hold out. Pretty well protected from above. Two turns in the canyon give you a swell chance. But what if they climb the other side?"

"This is my affair, Jones."

"Sure! But I got to eat. Where'll I put Star?"

"On the lope to the east."

"Shucks, feller! I just bought this hat, and now it's plumb ruint."

"A new one'll only cost you five."

"If I had the five. Where can I hide this Star hoss?"

No answer, but Jones had already picked out a spot, a recess in the canyon on the opposite side, a grassy place hidden by a rock wall and thick brush.

"And mister! Can't you toss down a hunk o' cold steak and a few chilled biscuits?" Jones called as he wheeled Star. "I filled with water a while back."

A moment's silence, then:

"Wait!"

Jones rolled another cigarette, lit it. Soon a white object arched through the air, was caught. Star's rider turned abruptly into the hidden nook.

There he knotted the reins above Star's neck.

"Can't tie you to this ground, boy," he said. "No tellin' what's goin' to happen."

Jones started up the canyon wall, carrying the flour sack containing food. He had jerked a rifle from its scabbard, and into the hip pockets of his overalls he had slipped two boxes of cartridges, one for the rifle, the other for the six-gun.

Swiftly, with appraising glances to each side and above, he climbed. His keen gray eyes had already selected a ledge, and upon it he spread himself, cartridges, rifle, grub.

After a careful look-see, he took a bite of steak, then of biscuit. He munched slowly, for he had nothing with which to wash down the food, and the sun was hot.

He was hidden from the ledge on the cliff across the canyon but could see it through a clump of brush. So far, he had only a voice by which to judge, and he wanted a glimpse of the man who knew how to use a rifle.

He caught none. Silence gripped the steep-walled gorge, a silence broken only by an occasional click from Star's shod feet below.

It was an hour before another sound reached him, a distant echo of rapid hoofs up the canyon. Just Jones frowned as he listened. Two or three horses might make a rhythmical beat. This was a steady roar.

"He wasn't so far wrong," Jones muttered. "Ten or maybe thirty! That's an army comin'!"

CHAPTER II

THE GATE TO HELL

THE blended roar of hoof beats ceased abruptly. Jones estimated they were nearly half a mile away.

"Be snakin' through the brush and

around the rocks," he muttered. "This is goin' to be better'n a circus."

He opened the box of rifle cartridges, spread several near by. A thin spot in the brush on his ledge gave him a good view, yet kept him hidden.

"If Star stays where he belongs, it will be perfect," he grinned.

Above and to each side, he was protected. He had seen to that. The man across the canyon was not so lucky. He could be reached from one side. Jones concentrated on that, picked out possible approaches.

"Knew he laid himself open there," Jones grunted. "But he stuck."

Jones saw a movement in the brush across and up the canyon, two hundred yards away, and marked down the spot. No need to waste shells. No telling how long this might last.

A head appeared at the big rock beside which the dead man lay. It was an easy shot, but Jones made no movement.

"Bait," he grinned. "If he don't draw fire, more will come."

Jones' alert gaze, constantly sweeping the canyon walls, caught other movements of brush, occasionally a hat, once the whole figure of a crawling man. All, he noted, were concentrating on the opposite cliff, working in from above, below and on the same level.

The stillness was shattered by a rifle. A body crashed down the opposite slope, rolled, lodged against a rock. A second shot draped a man over a boulder behind which he had been hiding.

"Some pardner I've picked," Jones grinned, but still he remained motionless.

Movements ceased on the opposite side of the canyon for a time. Then a revolver spoke twice, and instantly the gorge was crammed with the steady roar of guns.

Jones, watching the cliff where the lone battler lay, saw bits of brush fly.

"Regular mowing machine," he muttered.

But still he did not act.

The roar faltered, died. The steady encircling movement began once more. Jones noted each detail of it by twitching brush and an occasional glimpse of hat or shirt.

Again the rifle on the opposite cliff spoke. Four shots, swift but with a certain deliberate spacing. The last was drowned by a fresh roar of return fire.

This roar was less now. While some attackers sprayed the ledge where the lone rifleman lay, others openly darted forward to new and closer shelter.

"Time for me to begin," Jones growled.

He caught a man in mid-leap. A second tumbled an instant later. A third dropped, but dragged himself away.

The steady firing across the canyon had continued, drowning the sound of Jones' shots. He slipped three fresh cartridges into the magazine and waited, for no target was offered.

After a few moments a man stepped into view directly opposite, but Jones did not shoot. The fusillade had died.

"So far, they suspicion me not a tall," he grinned. "Some sorts o' advertisin' don't pay."

Silence again descended. The besiegers, scattered along the broken, brushy side of the canyon, evidently were beginning to realize that their losses were mounting rapidly and were not bringing any return.

For ten minutes nothing happened, so far as Jones could see. Not a twig moved. Not a hat showed. The man on the cliff did not fire. Jones watched the spot with some anxiety.

But he also kept a weather eye up canyon.

"If they've just a pinch o' sense, they'll be sending a few to climb this side," he muttered. "Yep! They savvy. Four headin' up that draw, figurin' to come out above me and spray the place where my pardner's roostin'."

The distance was too far for effective shooting, and in that silence Jones would instantly make his existence known. So far, the attackers' ignorance of his position, or even of his presence, was a valuable asset.

"I'll just have to chance it my pardner can get 'em first," he muttered.

Suddenly Jones stiffened, cocked his rifle. Directly across, and near one end of the ledge, a man was worming his way around a crag. Three feet more, and the lone defender of the cliff would be potted.

"I'll have to tell the world I'm here," Jones said harshly.

He fired. The man clung an instant, then arched out and dropped thirty feet to the rocks below.

Jones could feel the amazement in the silence that followed his shot. He took advantage of it to snuggle down behind some rocks, to see that his feet were drawn in, even that his boxes of cartridges were not exposed to a stray bullet.

THEN the rain of lead came. The opposite wall of the canyon was ablaze with guns. Jones looked to both sides of his nook. Gray splotches appeared miraculously on rocks. Pieces of brush jerked and disappeared, some at a distance of thirty or forty feet.

Jones grinned. "They're guessin', and they won't know if they've guessed right. I'll just put in the time havin' another snack."

He munched beef and biscuits while the hail of lead battered his retreat. His ears were attuned to the fusillade, noting rifle and revolver shots, even picking out the approximate positions of lone explosions.

More than that, he kept a fairly accurate count. Though some guns might be reloaded, and others half empty when the firing began, he concluded that about ten men were hidden across the canyon.

"And four gettin' in behind me makes fourteen," Jones computed. "Six done for that I know of, totals twenty, and they'd 'a' left a man with the horses. The feller wasn't so far wrong when he said ten to thirty."

The firing faded, died. Jones finished a biscuit. Cautiously he lifted his head and studied the opposite side of the canyon. So far as he could see, no man had been on it since Columbus sailed.

He studied the ledge where his ally lay and failed to find sign of his presence. He had not heard a rifle fired from there for some time.

Jones frowned. Stray or ricocheting bullets have queer habits, get through in unaccountable ways. One may have left Jones alone against the horde.

"Which will bring a new set o' tricks," he muttered as he looked swiftly about.

Brush moved. He fired. He saw a hat, took a chance it was not a ruse, and the hat disappeared.

Then, on the ledge across the canyon, he saw a man stand up and begin to climb. He was in a chimney, a cleft in the steep wall, and he carried a rifle. Two guns hung from belts.

The man turned, waved an arm in the general direction of Jones, went on.

"That's some sort o' partner to have!" Jones exclaimed. "Knows those four'll pot him from above me, so he's goin' higher."

And, after a moment, he added:

"Wonder what started him to fightin' this army all by himself."

The stranger was well protected in the chimney. Even his escape from the shelf on the cliff could not be seen. In time, the attackers might think him dead and draw closer.

Jones held his fire. Complete silence would start something.

It did. Brush began to move. Hats and parts of bodies were glimpsed. All along the side of the canyon, men were moving toward the ledge where the stranger had been.

Jones waited, knowing they would become bolder. His partner had disappeared on a shelf fifty feet higher. That would fool the four who sought to get at him from the opposite side, and permit him to answer their fire.

"And when the others start climbin' to his old hangout!"

Jones grinned as he patted his rifle.

Suddenly a shot sounded directly above Just Jones. A great rock overhung his nook, gave him complete protection. More shots came, all rifle. They settled into a steady bombardment.

Jones, watching closely, could see splinters of rock fly, and bits of brush drop, on the ledge where his partner had been. With vicious thoroughness, the quartette above him was mowing through the retreat. They kept it up until their rifles were empty.

Again silence descended upon the canyon. Jones could hear shells being slipped into magazines above him, could hear the murmur of voices. On the other side, the movement through the brush was resumed. He had several good shots but did not lift his weapon. The men above him had no suspicion of his presence.

A shout sounded. It came from above Jones.

"Go in and get him!" a harsh voice called. "There ain't a lizzard alive on that rock."

Not a man showed himself on the other side. One shouted again, but his words were drowned by the crack of a rifle. A body, cartwheeling against the blue sky, hurtled down within six feet of Jones' face.

Other shots came, steady, methodical. Jones heard curses directly overhead, then a sudden burst of fire. But it died quickly. Once more, silence descended upon the canyon.

Jones took advantage of it to listen for sounds above him. He heard none. If any of the four men were still alive, they were keeping quiet.

On the opposite side, all motion had ceased. Jones knew where several men were hidden, but none stirred a twig.

Star chose that moment to leave his retreat. Jones heard his shoes on the rock, a steady walk. Then the horse trotted into the open beneath him. . . .

A gun spoke on the opposide side. Star leaped in terror, started madly down the canyon. Just Jones saw a streak of red on the horse's back.

Instantly his rifle went into action. The man had exposed himself slightly to shoot. Jones fired steadily, with cold, deadly care, though he cursed furiously.

"Shoot a horse, will you!"

A body rolled from behind a rock, slid into view, lay still.

"And now the rest of you horse murderers!" Jones exclaimed harshly as he reloaded.

He knew approximately where three others lay hidden and his bullets began a search for them. One arose and ran, too swiftly to be caught at that distance.

On the ledge across the canyon, Jones' unknown ally stood up. He waved, to the east and up and around to the west. At once he began to climb, out of sight around a shoulder and toward the top.

Jones' gray eyes, no longer smiling, but hard and cold, watched him go.

"If you can get above their horses, we'll make a clean sweep o' this bunch," he said harshly.

CHAPTER III

INTO THE PIT

JUST JONES reloaded his rifle. The stranger would require at least half an hour to reach the crest and follow it to a spot above where the besiegers' horses had been left.

"And just before then, I'll begin to smoke 'em out," Jones muttered.

He knew now that he was alone on

his side of the canyon. His ally would not have left openly had any of the four been able to shoot.

Jones settled himself to a careful scrutiny of the brush and rocks opposite. Perhaps half a dozen men were hidden there, afraid to move. Some might be able to sneak back by the way they had come, around the shoulder and into the upper canyon.

A complete silence now filled the gorge. But after a little while a bird chirped. Others joined in the song. A road runner darted along the trail, stopped and cocked his head at the dead man lying at the turn. The normal life of the wilderness had been resumed. Death took a breathing spell.

Jones picked up his six-gun. The distance was too great for anything except a chance hit but the sound of it might make his foes believe he had exhausted his rifle ammunition. Then they would take bigger chances.

He waited twenty-five minutes before starting the smoking out process. In that time he had not seen a single movement across the canyon, but he was certain where at least two men were, or had been, and he began to stir them up.

Luckily, he saw his first bullet strike a rock six feet below where he had aimed, and thus got the range. He fired carefully, six times, without sufficient pauses to reload. When the revolver was empty, the thing he had hoped for happened. Two men broke cover instantly, went tearing through brush and leaping down the hillside.

Jones had the rifle ready. He saw one stagger and fall after the first shot, then drag himself behind a rock. The other used gravity to double his speed and rounded the shoulder untouched.

A third kept hidden and began firing at Jones' ledge. He exposed himself slightly, and at once a bullet spattered rock dust in his eyes, blinding him.

No one else revealed his presence. As Jones waited, watching closely, he heard a distant rifle shot, another. A burst of revolver firing followed, but the rifle kept steadily to its task. When it ceased, a rumble of hoofs rolled down the canyon. This grew fainter, died.

"Now this business begins to get risky," Jones spoke aloud.

He could not leave his well protected ledge without exposing himself. There might be none of the enemy left across the canyon, yet it was reasonable to expect that, out of twenty, one or two would have enough courage and determination to sit tight and wait for the breaks.

Jones settled himself to the siege. He could get away when darkness came, but the sun was still two hours high. And his ally had spoken of thirty men. That meant others were up the canyon and would be attracted by the shooting, or at least by the stampeded saddle horses.

Birds began to sing again. A half hour passed. Not a sign of a man across the canyon, though Jones watched it carefully. But his glance no longer strayed to the top and it was only the edge of his vision that caught a movement on the crest.

A man stood there. Jones' rifle jerked up. Then he recognized his ally.

The man started down. He stopped often to search the brush and rocks beneath him. After ten minutes he was in the midst of the place that had been infested by their foes only an hour or so earlier.

He angled through this. Dozens of times he was an easy target, yet no shot sounded. Finally he reached the bottom and started down the trail.

Jones arose, gathered his weapons and ammunition and descended. He emerged from the nook where Star had been feeding to find the other waiting.

The stranger was no more than twenty-five, of medium height and thick in the body. He was rolling a cigarette as Jones approached and his dark eyes

stared steadily across the forming cylinder.

Steadily and searchingly at first, then more softly, at last with a trace of a smile.

"Thanks, Jones," he said. "We'd better be dangling."

"Some of 'em get by you?"

"Four. And there was close to thirty up there."

"The others may get resentful, eh? I don't know how bad my horse is hurt."

Just Jones started at once down the canyon.

"My name's Driver," the other said as he fell into step. "Chet Driver. And I'm not a plain damned fool."

"You sure showed a glimmer o' sense climbin' to that next ledge. And then goin' for their horses."

"That was all figured in advance. The only thing I didn't count on was Pete Mongan campin' right below me."

"The first ledge you was on, it wasn't exactly foolproof," Jones suggested.

"If I was alone, I'd 'a' been out o' there before they got to me," Chet Driver answered. "But I knew you'd handle anybody who come too close."

Just Jones plodded on in silence for a few yards. Once he took a glance at the set face of his companion.

"Chet," he said, "they'd 'a' got you in the end."

"Sure."

Again Jones was silent.

"It's an education, roamin' around," he said at last. "Entertainin', too. New places full o' surprises. And always, when you're not expectin' it, you find a pearl in an oyster. Pardner, what you say we go in and get the rest o' this bunch?"

"Thanks," Chet said shortly, "but this is my affair."

"Shucks, boy! You ain't goin' to split up so good a team?"

"I heard all you said when you was stringin' Pete Mongan and—"

"I was stringin' him, after a fashion," Jones interrupted. "In a case like that, the best way to fool a man is to tell him the truth with every 'i' dotted and every 't' crossed."

"Then your name is Jones and you're a complete stranger hereabouts?" Chet demanded.

"Absogoshdarnlutely."

"And you didn't know you was headin' straight into Satan's Pit?"

Jones halted in amazement.

"Up this here canyon! This trail I stumbled onto! Good goshamighty! Not a man from Canada to Mexico ain't heard o' Satan's Pit. And me! Bustin' right along into it! Singin'! Say, Chet! Is all they say about it true?"

"And some! Dutch Hinkel and his gang have been in there ten years. They lose a few men, o' course, but they get enough new ones. That's why, when I saw you comin', I thought maybe—"

Chet touched Just Jones' left thigh. The overalls had been worn thin there. Marks of a thong that had tied down a holster were to be seen.

Just Jones laughed. "You've got eyes, boy! I've packed two guns, all right, but, bein' a stranger—you know. The other's on my saddle. I wasn't aimin' to join up with any wild bunch, though. And how come, if I'm not bein' too nosey, did you happen to think it was fittin' and proper for one lone man to tackle a regiment?"

Chet Driver did not answer for a moment. Jones glanced at him, and felt a chill wind.

"This canyon's the only entrance to Satan's Pit," Chet said at last in a harsh voice, "though it's supposed there's another trail out. But this is the only place where they can drive in cattle. The Pit's miles across, fine feed and water. Pretty straight walls or high mountains all around, and where this canyon enters the valley it's so narrow one man could hold off a hundred.

"After ten years, Dutch Hinkel's got a conceit for himself. There's been a

few tries at him. Once a bunch o' express company men tried starvin' him out. For six months they held this canyon, night, day and Fourth o' July. Dutch and his men only got fat, which looks like a sure sign they've got a trail out somewhere else."

"It could be found," Just Jones said.

"Yeah. You see, Dutch stuck to banks and trains at first. It's only the last few years, when the express company got to ridin' him hard, that he turned to cattle.

"Two weeks ago a dozen o' his bunch hit our ranch. Dad and my brother was there alone. Patchin' the corral fence. Guns in the house. Earl was plugged in the back. The old man still had the hammer in his hand when I found 'em. Run off every horse and beef critter. Burned the place. I found dad's and Earl's guns in the ashes o' the kitchen."

Chet Driver walked on in silence. Jones did not speak, nor did he even glance at the face of the young man beside him.

"I never killed a man until today," Chet said at last in a tense voice. "I don't figure I've killed a man yet. Beasts wouldn't do what they've done. You can't grade 'em as men."

"Sure," Just Jones agreed warmly. "Nothin' to worry about there. But how about the sheriff and the other ranchers?"

"Afraid, or tied in with Hinkel somehow. I tried to get some of the neighbors to join in, but they said it's no use. The sheriff claimed I didn't have any proof."

"So you tackled the job alone, eh?" Jones exclaimed with unfeigned admiration. "The first oyster I opened! Here's Star."

The horse was eating beside the trail. Jones ran forward to examine the wound.

"Creased!" he exclaimed. "Barely through the hide. He'll be stiff tomorrow, but it won't hurt him to travel."

He rubbed Star's nose, stroked his neck, said in a husky voice:

"Never mind, old boy. He'll not pull trigger again."

"Where's your horse?" he asked Chet.

"Turned him loose up this draw so's he could find his way back to water."

Jones rode into a pocket among the hills and caught up a bay gelding.

"Little hoss, you've got some master," he said as he started back. "Never expected to come out alive, but he took time to think about you."

Chet had retrieved his saddle from a clump of brush.

"We'd better give Dutch Hinkel some tracks to follow," he said as they started down the canyon.

"Sure!" Jones agreed. "Plain ones at first. Then about dark we'll mix 'em up a bit. And I know a place where Dutch'd never think to look for us."

Chet glanced up quickly. "Thought you was a stranger hereabouts."

"Even a stranger would know. The last place Dutch will think o' findin' us is—in Satan's Pit."

Chet turned a grim face ahead.

"Suits me," he said shortly. "But you—we won't be so lucky next time."

"Straight shootin' and usin' your head ain't luck," Just Jones retorted. "We've saved our luck for Satan's Pit, son."

CHAPTER IV

HELL BY THE TAIL

CHET DRIVER had spent most of his life near Satan's Pit. When a boy and before Dutch Hinkel's rule, he had even entered the Pit itself with his father, in search of strayed cattle.

He had no chance to explain this to Just Jones as they rode down the canyon at a swift lope. Nor, when they turned south toward Bowman, did Jones ask questions. He knew Bowman, for

he had recently come through there, and it was directly away from Satan's Pit.

But Jones was not surprised, an hour later, to see Chet turn west at Slow River ford.

"Dutch'll think sure we headed for town," Jones said as they splashed up stream in the shallow water. "And it'll be dark when he gets here."

"Bowman don't scare Dutch," Chet said. "He'll take the place apart huntin' for us."

"So all we've got to do is find that other trail into Satan's Pit. Any ideas?"

"The next thing to bein' sure," Chet answered harshly. "Earl and I stumbled into something a while back. It wasn't just cows that Dutch was after when he raided our place."

They kept to the river for a mile, left it on the south bank where a great sheet of rock came down to the water. They rode west for four miles, turned back to the river, waded up another half mile, left the stream when they found a bunch of cattle on the north bank.

"They'll drink again and drift up this draw," Chet said.

"Cover us complete," Jones grinned.

They no longer pressed their horses. Little chance of pursuit remained, and they were climbing steadily into the mountains. Chet led the way without hesitation. Just Jones contented himself with studying the country as best he could in the darkness, fixing landmarks in his mind.

At midnight Chet halted in a canyon. The night was moonless but stars were bright and air clear.

"There's a trail on top o' the ridge," Chet said. "Cattle work through here a lot and keep it well covered. Satan's Pit's a little way east. Beyond this, the trail hits bare rocks. Earl and I followed it to the crest. We could see the Pit."

"Dutch Hinkel would keep day and night guard on it," Just Jones said.

"Sure. At a split in some high rocks. Earl and I saw a hat jerk out o' sight, so we stopped. Guard must 'a' seen us —and that's why they raided our ranch. They didn't want nobody to know about this."

"This is gettin' interestin'," Jones said. "But we can't go through no split in the rocks with a guard watchin'."

"I figured—"

A wild shout from the top of the ridge stopped Chet. Other yips and yells followed. A coarse voice burst into song.

Jones and Chet had already slipped to the ground and were gripping their horses' noses.

"No chance their seein' us down here," Jones whispered. "And look at that!"

They were in a black pit, but the crest of the canyon was sharp against the star studded sky.

Along that crest rode a horseman. Another followed, another, man after man. Some were singing.

"Fourteen," Chet whispered when the last had disappeared.

"And mostly drunk," Jones added. "Feller, if we ever get out o' this, we're goin' to hear about a big train hold-up or bank robbery a couple o' days ago."

"And this bunch don't know what we did at the main entrance. Dutch'll be with 'em."

"Grand! We'll follow 'em right into the Pit!"

Just Jones was exuberant. He jerked off his saddle, removed Star's bridle.

"Lots o' horses and ridin' rigs in the Pit, if we ever need 'em again," he chuckled. "Hurry it, feller. We want to be close to 'em when they pass that guard."

Both belt guns now hung from Jones' waist. He jerked his rifle from its scabbard, stuffed extra ammunition into hip pockets, and began at once to climb the ridge. Chet was at his heels.

It was a rounded, grassy slope for a way, and then they struck a cow path angling in the right direction. They had climbed the two hundred feet in time

to hear the last snatches of song as the outlaws disappeared behind the base of a peak.

"Takin' it easy," Jones chuckled. "Horses rode out."

"And Dutch is sure they're not followed by any posse or they wouldn't be singin' and drinkin'," Chet added.

"Come on."

The trail was easily found even in the darkness. When it struck bare rock, an occasional yell or snatch of song served as a guide.

In a narrow, rocky defile, Chet sat down and pulled off his boots. A babel of voices sounded ahead, echoed between the straight walls.

The two crept closer, hugging crags and boulders, carrying their footwear. They made no sound, and the outlaws were too excited, and too confident of their security, to be alert.

"Shut your traps!" a harsh voice sounded. "I allus knew Pete Mongan would make a mess o' things, give him the chance. Wastin' a dozen men and gettin' nothin' to show for it!"

"That's Dutch himself," Chet whispered in Just Jones' ear.

"Frank," the outlaw leader continued, "you stay here and watch the pass. The rest o' us will go to camp, catch up fresh horses and ride down Bowman way. Someone's goin' to settle for this."

"What if a posse comes rampin' on your trail?" an angry voice demanded. "And I need some sleep."

"They won't," Dutch Hinkel retorted. "We threw 'em off thirty miles back. Besides, no one's going to find this pass in the dark. Ride, you gallows' meat!"

Nothing more than dim shadows was to be seen in that slit in the black rocks, but Chet and Jones heard the outlaws clatter away on the stony trail. They did not sing now, nor shout.

Frank, the pass guard, lit a cigarette. The cork of a bottle plopped. After a few minutes, a pale, flickering light showed on rock walls, and they knew Frank had lighted a fire in a sheltered niche.

He appeared for a moment, a bottle in one hand, a frying pan in the other, returned to the rock recess.

"One man makes less'n half the noise two do," Just Jones whispered in Chet's ear. "I'll go collect this critter."

He walked forward in his stockinged feet, a Colt in his right hand. He walked swiftly, close to the rocks, did not pause when he came to the fire light.

"Sky high!" he snarled when he found Frank, back toward him, beside the blaze.

Frank obeyed, turned in utter astonishment.

"All right!" Jones called. "We can put our boots on now. Soon's we hog-tie this lost soul."

Chet came running and Frank was quickly disarmed and bound. Boots donned, both Chet and Jones took a drag at the whisky bottle and then turned to the fire.

The recess in the rocks, they found, was well supplied with food and water, and they began at once the preparation of a meal.

"No hurry, our follerin' Dutch," Jones whispered to Chet. "Just so we get down into the Pit before daylight."

"How you two get here?" Frank demanded.

"With Dutch and his bunch," Jones answered. "Course, we didn't crowd 'em *too* close, we bein' ahead of our outfit."

"Meanin' you got more comin'?"

"Twenty-three, countin' us. And that's not sayin' how many's down at the main entrance."

Frank cursed them, but with a lack of confidence.

"Now take it easy, feller," Jones advised gently. "It's not our fault. The President of these here United States thought Satan's Pit, bein' a rich valley, ought to be opened to settlement, so he sent us in to clear out the weeds,

or anything else that might interfere with crops."

When they had finished eating and had lighted cigarettes, Just Jones squatted back on his heels.

"Dead or alive is the orders," he said. "Which gives us quite some chance to exercise our own judgment. Think this tender o' hell's fires might be a nuisance?"

"Not when I hog-tie him," Chet answered.

"And the others will be along soon after daylight. They can't miss, us markin' the trail with brush and rocks. Wonder if we can hear the fireworks in the main entrance when things get started down there?"

"May be," Chet drawled, "though that outfit's supposed to lie low until the wild bunch tries to get out."

"The big boss didn't take me off to one side and tell me secrets," Jones said. "But he did say for us to get down into Satan's Pit and scout a bit before daylight. So we better be movin'."

They examined the outlaw's bonds, gave him two long drags at the bottle, put his rifle and revolvers out of commission, threw all cooking and other knives and ammunition into a deep ravine, stamped out the fire and went on.

"This Frank will have a horse," Jones said. "We can take turns."

They found a horse and saddle not far beyond, and immediately afterward the great, black expanse of Satan's Pit lay spread before them. Several lights twinkled, almost at their feet.

"Their camp," Jones said. "Looks gentle enough. Dutch is gettin' ready to give us a chase to Bowman. How far's it across to that main entrance?"

"About four miles," Chet answered. "Dutch and his bank robbin' gang bein' away, what few was left couldn't 'a' followed us far last night."

"Four got by you in the canyon with the horses, a guard up here, maybe a man at camp, and thirteen with Dutch —that makes twenty. Us two'd better be gettin' down."

The trail wound and twisted back on itself continuously, dropping fifteen hundred feet. The horse knew it perfectly. They reached the bottom in thick timber and as they stood there a moment, listening, they heard a burst of hoof beats not far away. The sound faded quickly.

"Looks like we got Satan's Pit to ourselves, Chet," Just Jones said. "Makes me sort o' feel like I'd grabbed a steer by the tail and didn't have nothin' on but my undershirt."

CHAPTER V

THE DEVIL'S TRAP

THEY tied their horses and went forward through the timber. In a few moments they reached a corral fence. Beyond were hay stacks and stable.

These gave easy access to the outlaw camp. From the stable, they saw it consisted of several log buildings. All except one were dark.

"They wouldn't leave anyone here just to stand guard," Just Jones whispered. "Dutch is too sure nobody can get into the Pit."

"All our shots weren't dead center," Chet said.

"If it's wounded men, they'd have somebody here to tend 'em. We got to be careful."

At their first step away from the stable a dog barked. Instantly a chorus started and a pack of half a dozen came dashing toward them.

"Now, what's a wild bunch want to keep dogs for?" Just Jones demanded fretfully. "And how we goin' to get rid of 'em?"

They retreated into the dark shadows of the stable door as the dogs stopped a few yards away, barking furiously.

Jones watched the cabins beyond. He

expected to see a figure emerge from the one with the lighted window, or a door open, but nothing happened. The din raised by the hounds was terrific.

"If we could get 'em to chase us into the stable, then shut the door," Chet said.

"Any man on his feet is goin' to know they're not barkin' at a jackrabbit. Funny we never figured on dogs."

"Guess this is where we need that luck you was talkin' about."

They tried to entice the dogs into the stable, and failed.

"Take this pitchfork," Jones said. "Lead 'em back to the corral. If they don't split on us, I can get up to those cabins."

Chet acted at once. He rushed out. The dogs retreated. Then he ran around the stable, with the pack in pursuit. After a moment, Just Jones darted to the nearest cabin.

He had not been deceived by the silence in the outlaw's camp. The light meant the presence of someone. After years of security, and with all the men at his command, Dutch Hinkel would spare at least one to care for the wounded.

But Jones did not expect more than one. When he saw a door open and a figure silhouetted against the light for a moment before the door was pulled shut again, he slipped forward rapidly. His rifle trailed in his left hand. A Colt was in his right.

A window was just beyond the door, but a ray of light came from a space between the logs where the chinking had been knocked out.

Just Jones dropped to his knees and peered in. He saw a pair of legs only a few feet away. The legs were unsteady. The feet stumbled.

Beyond was a bunk. An arm hung from it. The hand was bloody.

The unsteady legs disappeared in a corner. Jones could only guess whether the man was drunk or wounded. No voices came from within. The bloody hand did not move.

The dogs were making a fearful racket behind the corral, but no one in the cabin seemed concerned. Jones rose to his feet. The man inside was too drunk or too badly wounded to care. Or he was confident someone else would handle the situation.

The last thought was a jab in the side. Jones spun around.

"Drop 'em!" a voice sounded.

In his surprise, Jones' first thought was of a rattlesnake. A quality in that voice was not unlike the venomous buzz of the reptile's warning.

"Now!"

Jones obeyed. The voice was very close. Stove wood, neatly corded, ranged beside him, and the voice had come from behind it. He turned his head and saw the dull reflection of a gun barrel.

"Reach!" the voice sounded again, and in it Jones heard those tones and stresses which, mingled, spell cold, remorseless purpose. Jones "reached," as high as he could.

"Turn your back! Face the door. Closer to it. Pete! Open up!"

Unsteady feet sounded on the floor inside. The door was jerked back.

"Inside, you! And walk slow!"

Jones entered. A man stood in the center of the room. His eyes were bandaged. He swayed a bit, and a bottle of whisky stood on the table. Jones remembered he had blinded an outlaw with rock shattered by a bullet.

A glance showed two men in bunks. A blanket was drawn over the face of one. The other, with a bloody hand hanging limply, lay still, eyes closed, face ghastly white. After long pauses, his chest heaved slightly.

"Into the corner!" the venomous voice sounded.

Jones obeyed. He heard a peculiar footstep behind him, ventured to turn.

For a long moment he saw only a face distorted by livid scars and by cruelty

and hatred. So evil was that twisted countenance, Just Jones was scarcely aware that the man's left sleeve was empty or that his right leg was a battered wooden spindle strapped to the knee.

"What's up, Martin?" demanded the man with the bandaged eyes.

"Plenty! Hell's busted loose inside the Pit. I told yuh those dogs wasn't chasin' no bobcat. Hear 'em! No tellin' how many more's loose around camp. Dutch has sure lost his grip."

"What you talkin' about?" and this time Jones recognized the blindfolded outlaw as Pete Mongan, who had stopped him in the canyon.

"Enough!" Martin retorted. "I catch this coyote sniffin' around our shack. Why ain't you able to see so you can be o' some help? He's a two-gun man and I got only one offen him. Feller, lie face down on the floor."

Jones obeyed. He knew death when it glinted in a man's eyes. A revolver muzzle bored into his back and he felt his second gun hooked from its holster by the peg leg.

"Then he's one o' the bunch that whipsawed us in the canyon," Pete snarled. "What you keepin' him alive for?"

Pete drew his own gun, began groping toward the corner, to which Just Jones had returned.

"Back up!" Martin commanded, and his tone was as deadly in addressing his fellow outlaw as when he spoke to Jones. "You're no good without eyes, especially when drunk, and you never was much account when sober and with two lamps. I'd as soon shoot you as him. We got to find out how this twister got into Satan's Pit and how many more there is of 'em."

Pete Mongan obeyed, and kept tight lips over his curses. Jones, watching Martin, knew he was up against as ruthless and cold-blooded a killer as he had ever seen. Evidently the man had lost leg and arm in outlaw raids or gun battles and was the more embittered by his crippled condition and by an inability to ride the long trail with his fellows.

"Now, you yaller snake," Martin continued as he turned his venomous glance upon Jones, "how'd you get into the Pit?"

"It bein' dark, and me bein' a stranger, I couldn't tell exactly," Just Jones drawled. "From the stars, I'd say I traveled about due east."

"That's him!" Pete Mongan shouted. "Know his voice. The jasper who tried to tell me he worked for the Lazy O. Took a shot at me, too."

Again Pete's gun came out, but Martin, agile despite his wooden leg, leaped and rapped the blinded outlaw across the side of the head with his long Colt's barrel. Pete staggered, dropped.

"So you was down in the canyon yesterday, eh?" Martin snarled as he confronted Jones. "That damned sheriff double-crossin' us, is he? Picked a time when he knew Dutch and half the gang'd be away. How many men you got?"

"Twenty-two," Just Jones answered readily.

"The boys guessed about that, those that was able to get back. How many you got in the Pit now?"

"Two was creased, but they was able to ride to Bowman all right."

Martin glared at him.

"Twice twenty couldn't get into Satan's Pit through the canyon the way we work it," he snorted.

"Dead right," Jones agreed. "Only, we put a man up over a cliff with a rope and he come around and got your guard from behind."

Just Another Jones had a marvelous ability to tell a wild lie with every semblance of truth. Martin, hard bitten, virulent, believing in no man, was impressed by the ready answers.

"Yeah, they left Stew Blake at the 'door'," he growled. "Stew *would* get caught from behind."

But, while the outlaw might believe, the dangerous quality of the man increased. Jones saw that. The cripple was poison, deadly poison. The tighter the jam, the quicker he would strike. A rattlesnake who could strike many times his length!

"After we got your Mr. Blake," Just Jones continued, "we kept quiet, figurin' on lettin' anybody out who wanted to go. Sauce for the goose might not agree with the gander, you know."

Martin did not comment. He glared at Jones, and Jones knew he was reading that glare aright.

Suddenly Jones realized the dogs had ceased barking. Quiet dogs meant that Chet Driver had disposed of them in some way, and that Chet would come hunting for his companion, would come at once to the lighted cabin.

He would come innocently, confidently, for there had been no shooting. And Chet's appearance meant death.

The scarred, crippled outlaw grinned, and it was like a searching flame.

"Feller," he said, "get over to that window. Put your back right up against it. The bobcat's treed the dogs. I'm goin' to get you, but I want to do in as many of the others as I can before your time comes."

Jones obeyed, as he never had obeyed any order before. Martin, with that deft wooden leg of his, dragged Jones' belt gun across the floor, hooked his one little finger in the trigger guard and lifted the weapon to the table.

Again the wooden leg went into action, pushing a box from a corner. The little finger gripped its edge, lifted it, stood it back of the lamp.

Jones saw the deadly purpose of that. The box blocked light from nearly half the room. Martin retreated into black shadow. Jones could see only a small, dim circle above the box, a circle from which lead and fire would roar.

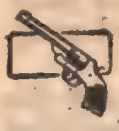
"When they come, invite 'em in," Martin said in a low voice. "Make it sound real, feller, because if they don't believe you, you die."

"Go to hell!" Jones said.

Martin laughed. "I'm as good as there now. Don't I know it? What I'm hankerin' for is company."

CHAPTER VI

DEATH IN THE PIT



JUST JONES stood quietly, staring at the black shadow across the room. He could not see Martin, could not even be sure where the outlaw stood, but he knew every line in that evil, distorted face, every thought behind it.

Martin was not like Pete Mongan, whose upturned feet lay in the light. Pete was a blusterer, a mixture of cruelty and cowardice, a killer who always demanded the advantage. The cripple was cold, fearless, embittered by life, the most dangerous type that ever pulled trigger. He could be depended upon to do exactly what he said, and his actions had already impressed Jones with his utter competence.

Jones' own expression did not alter in the least. The trace of a smile still played about his mouth. His gray eyes were open and frank.

Behind that careless mask was a sensitiveness to sounds and impressions, to the whole tense situation, as acute as raw skin to scraping sandpaper.

The situation itself was clear. Chet Driver would come directly to the lighted cabin. He would see Jones standing with his back to the window. If Chet came close enough, Martin could see him outside, and himself remain in complete darkness. Martin undoubtedly could shoot straight enough to hit him. If Chet opened the door, he would die instantly. If Jones warned him, Jones himself would die.

But Chet did not come. Outside was only silence. Just Jones' raw senses

received no message. He leaned back against the window frame and relaxed.

A mouse darted across the floor, paused at Pete Mongan's feet, went on under the bunk in which the dead man lay.

"It ain't the night before Christmas," Just Jones chuckled.

Martin cursed him.

They heard another mouse in the corner near the door.

"You boys ought to keep a cat," Jones suggested amiably.

Martin did not comment. The rustle continued. The dim circle in the blackness above the box disappeared. Jones could sense the outlaw's suspicions. Then the mouse scampered out from beneath the bunk, hopped onto one of Pete Mongan's boots, perched on the toe.

Just Jones laughed outright.

"That's what I call cute," he said. "Or maybe you want me to chase him off before he takes a nibble."

Jones advanced on one foot.

"Back!" Martin snarled. "You're livin' only because live bait's better'n dead. But I can use dead."

Jones smiled, relaxed against the window. The mouse jumped down and scampered into the corner near the door. Both men heard it rustle there.

And both heard a distant sound, a sound as familiar to them as their own voices. Horses' hoofs were pounding the earth, pounding it furiously.

Martin chuckled. "There come your friends."

Just Jones preserved his smile with a great effort. He knew it could be only Dutch Hinkel's men returning.

"Call 'em in, and like you meant it," Martin commanded. "I want a lot o' company on the long trail."

The distant sound grew stronger. Jones measured the distance to his Colt on the table, to a table leg, to the door. He must risk a lunge for one of them.

The mouse continued to rustle in the corner. Jones laughed, and his muscles were ready for a spring.

A roar shook the cabin. The lamp vanished. Jones threw himself down and away from the door. He fell softly on his hands as fire flashed toward the window and the door and Martin's gun thundered again and again.

Stress had given Jones intimate knowledge of the cabin. Under cover of the noise of Martin's shooting, he lifted forward in the darkness, and his right hand struck the Colt on the table.

Then he ducked underneath, and a groping hand struck Martin's wooden leg, gripped it, jerked furiously.

Martin cursed as he came down, but Jones was swarming over him, seizing the outlaw's one wrist, shaking the gun from the single hand.

"All right?" Chet Driver's anxious voice came from within the door.

"Strike a match," Jones panted.

Martin fought furiously but was quickly overpowered.

"It's hell to have to fight a cripple," Jones said. "Lamp on the shelf by the door. Hurry it, Chet!"

No need to tell Chet that. The sound of approaching horsemen was increasing.

"Found your six-gun and rifle lying outside," Chet said as he moved swiftly. "Knew something was wrong. Light from that crack between the logs. Couldn't see him, so I shot out the light."

They bound Martin's arm to his side, his good leg to the wooden, with a lariat that hung on a peg. Jones stuffed a muslin tobacco sack, half full, into the outlaw's mouth and bound it there with his bandanna.

The approaching horsemen were closer now. Jones and Chet ducked out and closed the door. Two guns were soon in Jones' holsters, the rifle in his hands.

"Four or five comin'," he said. "Wonder why."

"They'll head for the corral."

The two ran swiftly to the last cabin. Dawn showed above the eastern rim of Devil's Pit.

"Window and door facing just right," Jones said when they were inside. "How'd you tame the hounds?"

"Cut an old crowbait's throat in the corral. Hacked off some steaks. Those dogs was sure hungry."

"We don't work together so bad," Jones chuckled. "That peg leg had guts. But I heard a mouse—*after* he'd left the corner."

They were busy for a moment poking mud chinking from between the logs.

"Listen," Jones said. "I want Dutch Hinkel—alive."

"Why?" Chet demanded in astonishment.

A clatter of hoofs at the corral gate rushed both to the window. The light had increased. They saw four men dismount and jerk saddles from their horses.

"Dutch!"

Alarm and warning were in the word.

"What's the matter?"

"These hounds are eatin' a hoss."

Light grew quickly. Chet and Just Jones saw the four crowd through the gate. They heard voices, heard the words:

"Throat cut!"

The four came out of the gate. Each held a Colt in either hand. They walked swiftly and alertly, with weapons waist high.

"Light in Martin's shack," one said.

"Too many queer things happenin' in Satan's Pit," a harsh voice sounded. "Martin could o' heard us comin'."

"That's Dutch," Chet whispered. "The big 'un."

"Martin's queer since he got limbed," a man said.

"Martin's game!" Dutch Hinkel retorted furiously. "Wish I had more like him. Those others, hightailin' it down the canyon and scatterin' through the hills because they saw a shadow! Hope they all hang."

"This last haul, split only four ways now, ain't so bad."

"Frank's at the pass."

"T' hell with Frank. We'll just drill him as we go by."

They were thirty feet away now, coming four abreast. The light was much stronger.

"Drop them guns!"

Just Jones shouted from the window, then ducked. He knew the guns would not be dropped.

Eight Colts came into action at once. The window was shattered. Bits of bark dropped from the logs. Mud chinking was knocked out.

Jones and Chet began firing from their loopholes. Their targets were plain.

"Remember!" Jones warned harshly. "I want Dutch alive."

An outlaw dropped. Another staggered, fell, kept on shooting until both guns were empty. The third darted back toward the stable, crouching, zigzagging. Both Chet and Jones tried for him, and missed.

Only Dutch Hinkel remained. He ceased firing, stood with guns ready. Chet aimed carefully.

"No!" Just Jones snapped. "He's mine!"

"Dutch killed my dad and my brother," Chet retorted.

"He'll hang, son," Jones said. "I promise. And you've squared the other."

Jones stood up.

"Drop 'em, Dutch," he called. "Just Jones talkin'."

Jones stepped out the door, both guns ready. The outlaw leader stared. His own weapons, held at the waist, sank slowly.

Then suddenly they flicked up again, and Dutch fired. But the bullets sped harmlessly into the air as the lead from Jones' rifle hit Dutch in the thigh, whirled him around and knocked him to ground. It took Dutch only a split

second to master himself again after the shock of the wound but when he blinked open his pain dazed eyes it was to see Jones standing over him. He was helpless.

"Thought you'd try that," said Just Jones.

"Dutch, the governor wants to see you. Sent me to bring you in."

Chet Driver, walking beside him, whirled in astonishment.

"Governor!" he repeated. "You mean you was comin' in here alone? Into Satan's Pit?"

"You see, son, the governor knew about the sheriff of this county. Thought it was sort of a disgrace to the state, the way he was in cahoots with Dutch here, so he asked me to see what I could do about it."

"You done plenty!" said Dutch Hinkel through white lips. "Where's the rest o' your posse?"

"There was only us," Just Jones answered innocently. "Chet Driver here, and me. I wouldn't 'a' got far alone, maybe. But Chet without a father or a brother—he got to be a whole army, Dutch."

A Modern Charge of Piracy

A CHARGE of piracy in American waters jarred the calm of Coast Guard Headquarters in Washington recently. Back of it was the injection of the terroristic methods of the racketeer into a controversy that had split the Gloucester fishing fleet into two factions. Part of the fishermen were on strike against the low price of mackerel and those who would have continued fishing were deterred by threats of violence.

In splendid fishing weather the fleet remained fast to the piers.

Wherefore Captain John Morash, six-foot-three, rumbled deep in his broad chest. The mackerel were running; the fleet should be out on the banks catching good fish for people to eat. Moreover, he was a free-born Yankee, master of his vessel and taking orders from nobody.

"Be damned," said Captain Morash, "I'm going out. What do you say, men?" His crew agreed.

Excitement rippled over the stagnant fish wharves when his schooner *Leretha* cast off and hoisted sail. His act was at once a defiance and a challenge.

There are two versions of what happened next.

According to Captain Morash and his crew, the *Leretha* was overhauled by a bigger and faster boat, the *Natalie II*, twelve miles off shore. Aboard the *Natalie II*, he said there were more than fifty men. He was ordered to turn about or his boat would be blown to pieces, he added; and, when he declined to alter his course, a gun was trained on him.

With a crew of twelve, and unarmed, Captain Morash yielded to superior numbers and returned to port. But things began popping the moment he set foot on shore. His charge of piracy on the high seas went to the Coast Guard in Washington. The cutter *Antietam* headed for the fishing grounds.

The other group denied the charge. "The *Natalie II* merely sailed alongside" they said, "and her crew pleaded with the crew of the *Leretha* to stop fishing."

But Captain Morash's interrupted voyage broke the deadlock and brought law again to Gloucester waters. Two days later he led fifty vessels of the fleet out to sea. Peace reigned again on the mackerel banks—the cutter *Antietam* on patrol to maintain it.

KNOCKOUT IN THE STICKS

By EDDY ORCUTT

"SURE, I'LL see him in the ring—but I want to see what he's like outside the ring," I explained. "How would it be if I went to dinner with you too?" I asked.

I could hear Pop Quigley's hard little chuckle over the 'phone.

"Make it next year," he said, "when times get better."

"Hell, I'll grab the check," I told him. "I'll buy three dinners."

"Well," Pop said, "in that case—"

So I checked out at the city desk and went over to the Metropole to find Pop and his fighter. I hadn't seen Pop since he coached the varsity ball team, back when I was in school—hadn't known till that afternoon that he was Jersey Kid Noonan's manager. I wanted to say hello to Pop, of course, but I specially wanted to get a close-up of the Jersey Kid for several reasons.

The Kid was a couple of years past the Madison Square Garden money, but he was big-time, just the same. He'd been in there with boys like Tommy Loughran, Uzcudun, Ernie Schaaf, Johnny Risko. I wanted to get a look at a big-timer—not just in the ring, doing his act for a mob in the sticks, but outside the ring. I wanted to see him just before a fight. I wanted to get a slant on how he looked at it, how he felt about it. Furthermore, the Jersey Kid was billed to fight Nitro Johnson at the Coliseum that night. Nitro was two hundred and twenty pounds of the roughest, toughest black meat on the Coast.

I wanted to see how any fighter, big-league or otherwise, would feel about going in the ring with a black man-killer like Nitro Johnson.

With my old baseball coach managing the Kid, I had my chance. I beat it over to Pop's hotel.

"Well, well," Pop chuckled, "if it ain't one of the Wonder Boys!"

He was sitting in a leather armchair in the lobby—a gray, bench-legged little man with a sunfield tan that will stay on his face till the day he dies. He gave me a broad grin from under the tilt of his derby.

We kidded a while about old times, but Pop stopped grinning when I asked him finally about the Kid.

"He'll be down in a minute," Pop said.

"What's a guy like Jersey Kid Noonan doing out here in the sticks?" I asked. I knew that the Kid was past his peak, but I figured he'd be fighting Nitro Johnson that night for less than six hundred dollars—not much money for a boy who'd earned a thousand dollars a minute in his time.

"Dough," Pop said. "The Kid's

broke, and he's got to make himself some dough before he's through."

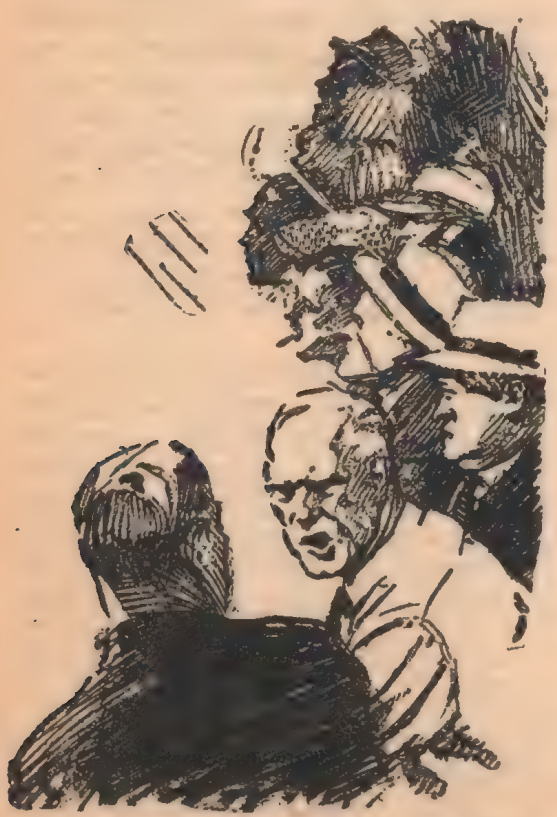
"What happened to what he made back there?" I asked. "Easy come, easy go?"

Pop made a bitter noise against his teeth. "'Easy go!'" he said. Then he asked: "Ever hear of a bank blowing?"

I nodded. Pop said: "Those things get around, don't they—even out here. Well, we had plenty," he said. "A hundred and twenty-two grand. And that's what happened to it. Our bank blew."

"Tough," I said.

"Eleven months after the Kid washed up," Pop said, "the Kid had got his old folks settled down in Sunnyside. Him and me played around a while, and the Kid was figuring to settle down, himself—maybe find a nice girl to settle down with. That sort of thing. Then—smacko! The bank blew. So the Kid's folks live in a four-room flat in Camden, and the Kid's picking up lunch money, knocking over stevedores in the sticks."



"How long can he keep it up?" I yelled at Pop over the mob's noise.

"How in hell do I know?" he yelled back.

"Nitro Johnson is no round-heel," I warned him.

Pop gave me the eye. "The Kid'll kill that eight-ball," he said.

He sat with his elbows on the arms of the chair, his hands locked across his flat belly. He looked down at the floor. He added in a tired kind of a voice: "And it won't mean a damn thing if he does."

He gave me an angry look. "Look," he said, "you made a crack about 'easy come.' It didn't come easy. The kid is twenty-eight now, and he made his first pro start when he was sixteen. It took him eight years to get up in the money—and they were already calling him a trial-horse, see. Never a champ, and never a chance to be a champ.

"You think a hundred grand is a lot of money for a Jersey City alley-rat to lay up in twelve years—but the Kid spent his whole lifetime, see, in that twelve years. He grew up in it, and he grew old in it.

"Running a grocery, it might of been forty years before he soaked away a hundred grand—I don't know," Pop said. "But it would've been forty years too, before it burned him out and washed him up, the way the fight racket did in twelve."

He looked at his watch. He said: "But the jack is gone, and we still gotta eat, so we're peddling what we got left. It's all burnt out here," and Pop laid his hand on the flat of his midriff, "but the Kid's got a big-time noodle on him. He's ring-wise, see—and he's got a big-time rep. That's what we're peddling in the Sticks. And that's all. It's all we got."

"Anyhow," I said, "it'll be enough to lick that coon tonight."

"So what?" Pop asked. He gave me a direct, angry look.

"Any place we show," he said, "they throw in the roughest thug they can

find. We got a rep, but not a big enough rep to pick push-overs, like a champ would. For cakes and carfare the Kid takes a chance with big, awkward maulers that the champ wouldn't fight for fifty G's. And what if we do knock 'em over, what of it? Tonight," he said, "we drag down maybe a month's keep for me and the Kid and the Kid's folks. Maybe it's a month before we work again. Maybe the Kid busts a knuckle on the coon's head—doctor bills and a layoff. Maybe we gotta burn a couple hundred in carfare to the next money town. And maybe after a while," Pop said, "there ain't any more money towns."

I said to him: "Gosh, it can't go on forever."

"When it's all gone," Pop said, "the old folks go over the hill and the Kid goes to sweeping out a pool-hall some place." He looked at his watch again. "It's gotta go on forever," he said, "because that's all there is—there isn't any more."

He stood up. Jersey Kid Noonan was just throwing his room key on the clerk's desk, across the lobby. Pop started over and I followed along.

Up to then, the Jersey Kid had been only a sport-page name, like Max Baer or Schmeling or Carnera, and throwing Jersey Kid Noonan in with a rough, mean black boy like Nitro Johnson didn't seem bad, just exciting. But seeing the Kid himself and shaking hands with him made it different.

The Kid was tall and rangy, but he looked too frail for the big coon. He was wearing a gray overcoat, gray felt hat, a nice tie, but even in his overcoat he didn't look big enough. When I reached out my hand, he shook it without looking directly at me. His hand was big and solid. I got the queer notion that there had been some mistake. I suppose I had a picture in my mind of what big-time Jersey Kid Nooan would look like, and the Kid didn't look like the picture. This was just an ordinary man. They were going to throw him into a twenty-four-foot ring, pretty soon, with a coal-black wild man that would cut loose to murder him. Every ticking second brought him closer to that first gong. And it was wrong—mistaken, somehow. I got a heavy feeling at the pit of my stomach.

Noonan said something about being glad to meet me. His face was colorless, with black brows, nose a little battered, not much expression, but not bad-looking. He looked past me casually, and said, "Let's go."

I took them across the street to the Bohemia Grill.

INSIDE that first minute, I learned something. I learned there was no use trying to find out how the Kid felt, just before a fight, what he thought about it, how it looked to him. There was nothing to find out. Absolutely nothing. None of it made any difference to the Jersey Kid. He wasn't sullen. He was not nervous. He was not cocky or hard-boiled. He was neutral. He didn't care. He was going to dinner because it was time to eat, and when it was time to fight, he'd crawl in the ring the same way he walked across the street to a restaurant.

It was queer, but the sense of it was complete. I didn't matter to him, and the town didn't matter. Crawling through the ropes against Nitro Johnson didn't matter. The street and the town and the ring and the ringside mob—it was all the Sticks to Noonan. None of it mattered. The Kid was just going through another date in the Sticks.

Walking with him was like being near somebody not entirely real—like an ex-president of the United States or a man about to be hanged.

Then, over in the Bohemia, he showed one spark.

We went to one of Catherine's tables, and when she set it up for us, she smiled "Hello." I introduced Pop and the Kid.

I told her the Kid was fighting Nitro Johnson at the Coliseum that night.

Noonan tried to stand up, but the booths at the Bohemia are narrow. It sounds foolish to say that a prizefighter blushed, but that is what Noonan did. Catherine gave him a quick, pleasant once-over, and the Kid's blush was not just due to his awkwardness. Catherine is a slick waitress and a nice girl. She said: "Oh, you're a fighter?"

"Yeh," the Kid said, "that's my business."

That spark flickered in the Kid's eyes when he met Catherine's. Hers are clear brown. The Kid flushed, looked at her—then looked past her, the way he had with me.

Under the lights in the booth, the Jersey Kid showed the puffy cheekbones that all fighters get, and there were fine scars on his face from healed abrasions, but his nose was not bad. The chief mark of the ring was a scar over the left eyebrow. He had taken a bad cut there, several, probably, and the scar was puckered where stitches had been taken. It ran down into the eyebrow, making it frown a little. When the Kid blushed, the stitched edges of the scar stayed white.

Catherine said: "That's a hard business, I guess."

Noonan studied the menu and smoothed his hair with one big hand. "It's not so bad," he said, "sometimes." Pop gave his dry little chuckle when the Kid added that "sometimes." The Kid glanced up at Catherine when Pop chuckled, and something in her face made him try to smile. But Catherine looked away quickly.

We ordered our dinner.

Half way through the meal, while Catherine was busy elsewhere, Noonan began to talk about her. "I like that kid," he said. "She's all right." I agreed with him, everybody likes Catherine. "I'd like to meet her," Noonan said. Pop laughed.

"You already have," Pop said, but Noonan didn't smile.

"I know," he said, "but I mean get acquainted. We can come back tonight after we're through. Will she be here then?" he asked me.

Not wanting to promote anything, I said I didn't know.

"We'll be through early," Noonan argued.

Pop said: "I hope to God we won't!"

I was jumpy, kind of sick and excited around the midriff, and this dumb calm of Noonan's made me all the more so. But while I picked at my food, the Kid stripped his T-bone down to first principles. He did it methodically, like a man laying bricks.

When Catherine brought our desserts, she had a custard for the Kid.

"You could have a custard for dessert, couldn't you?" she asked. The Kid hadn't had any trimmings with his meal—just the steak, a big platter of dry toast and a pot of tea. Catherine wanted him to have something nice before he went.

The Kid asked her suddenly: "How would it be if I dropped in to see you after I'm through tonight?"

He blurted it out, but Catherine got the look on the Jersey Kid's face and she smiled at him. "I'm on till midnight," she said, "but if you're trying to date me up—"

"Oh, sure," Noonan said. "I just meant drop in and say hello."

"We're going to stop in for a cup of coffee after the fights," I put in. "We were just hoping you'd be here."

"That's nice," Catherine said. She quit smiling. "Sure, I'll be here," she told us.

When she had gone, the Kid said to me: "Here, you better eat this." I grinned, but Noonan was quite serious—and so was Pop. It wouldn't be right to leave Catherine's custard. I ate it for the Kid, and shoved the empty dish over to his place.

Pop led the way out. He was red in the face, and he blew his nose with an angry sort of noise. I was too dumb to get what he was angry about.

We sat around the hotel for a while after dinner. The Jersey Kid had lost interest in the Sticks, again, and before long he went up to the room. "I'll be seeing you," he said. He lounged over to the desk.

I said to Pop: "I don't see how a guy can rest, just before a fight. I'd be walking the floor."

Pop swore under his breath. "Let's play some pool," he said.

It was rotten pool, and a long hour of it. My dinner hadn't set very well, and my hands kept sweating. The pool-room clock ticked along toward the fight time, and I couldn't forget it. Pop had little to say, but that notion of the Kid's finding some nice girl was an obcession with him.

"Yeh," Pop jeered at himself, "an' he'll wind up punch-drunk, cleaning out goboons in a bar."

It was a long hour.

A little before nine, we went up to the room. The Kid had been lying on the bed, sound asleep. He woke easily, stretched like a cat. He rubbed the sleep out of his eyes, washed, dressed—not bothered and not interested.

I picked up the grip with his ring clothes—Pop had checked the stuff over while Noonan was dressing—and we went down to the taxi line. Twenty minutes later we shoved into a dressing room at the Coliseum. The house was jammed. The special was just going on when we got there.

Our handler, a Mexican boy who fought prelims under the name of Blackie Pancho, was waiting for us. He stood aside while Pop laid out Noonan's things on the bench. The Kid undressed and got into his ring clothes in that same frowning, indifferent way. And in the chill of that dressing room, with the mob's noise all around us, it seemed more unnatural than ever. The Kid stripped for the fight the way a carpenter would put on his overalls for a day's work.

He limbered up, shadow-boxed around the room, then shrugged into his dressing gown and crawled onto the rubbing table. The dressing gown was black silk with "The Jersey Kid" embroidered in white letters. Pop nodded at Blackie Pancho.

The dressing room was damp from the cement-floored shower. It smelled like a low-grade comfort station, with added odors of sweat, liniment, wet clothes. The bleachers were directly overhead, above an air space that muffled the pounding and yelling. People crowded past in the corridor, talking, thumping the walls, laughing. A kind of dank, waiting chill in the air made me shiver.

"This is a lousy room," I said. Nobody answered.

Noonan lay on the table, his face pillowed in his arms, and the Mex gave his legs a light rub. The black dressing gown, thrown back so the handler could work, made the Jersey Kid's legs look white and smooth.

Time ticked along. The noise hammering all around us gave notice when the special ended and the semi-final went on. Pop said: "Well, it won't be long now." The Mexican boy looked around and smiled. Pop took a roll of gauze, some adhesive tape and pair of scissors, and went over to bandage the Kid's hands. When one hand was done, the Kid put it back for a pillow under his head, and Pop bandaged the other.

"How do they feel?" he asked.

Noonan lifted his head and clenched and unclenched his hands several times. He said casually: "They're all right." He pillowed his head on his arms again and seemed to be dozing.

"He ain't worried, hey?" Blackie said, but Pop went back to the bench without answering. He put on a sweater coat. He took various things out of the

satchel and put them in his pockets—a bottle of collodion, smelling salts, tape, a pocket knife. His hands trembled.

I said: "It's cold as hell in here," and the Mex gave me a grin.

The call came at last.

"We'll let the nigger go in first," Pop said. Noonan walked thoughtfully around the room, clenching his bandaged hands together, flexing his knees. The handler watched him.

"How y' feel?" Pop asked. The call boy stood in the open door, and the mob's thunder pounded in.

The Jersey Kid used both hands to shift the cup at his groin, spraddling his legs to shift it into a comfortable position. He said: "I'm O. K. Let's go."

I TAGGED them through the hangers, on the corridor, out into the runway. The Mex carried the water bucket and a clean towel. Faces turned toward us in the dark of the mob, and we went down toward the ring lamps through a madhouse of hooting and booing. Nitro Johnson had just entered the ring.

At the ringside I slipped into a seat beside Pop's, back of Noonan's corner.

The Kid vaulted into the ring. Pop and Blackie Pancho crawled through the ropes. The mob quit booing Johnson and began cheering and whistling for the Jersey Kid. I looked over to the coon's corner. A sneer edged his grin—the mob hated him, and he hated the mob.

The Kid scuffed his shoes in the resin and looked out at the house with that dead-pan frown of his. He raised his hand briefly to the mob's noise, turned and walked over to Johnson's corner.

The nigger gave Noonan the eye. He touched the Kid's bandages and looked up with a thick-lipped snarl. He was mean, and wanted Noonan to know it. But the Kid didn't look at the black man's face—just glanced at his bandaged hands. Then he gave Nitro a shove on the shoulder, turned his back and walked away.

The ringsiders saw Johnson shift his eyes. They cackled, then began to applaud, but the Kid paid no attention. He went casually to his corner. Pop was breaking the gloves. The Kid sat down and held out his right hand.

The minutes dragged, then. The timekeeper banged his gong, the announcer did his stuff, but it was all a slow-motion nightmare to me. The referee crawled through the ropes, took his introduction, called the fighters out to the center of the ring. My hands were ice-cold.

The Jersey Kid and Pop Quickly turned away from the referee, at last, though, and Pop jerked the dressing gown off Noonan's shoulders. In the other corner, the black man shed a green and yellow bathrobe. Pop scrambled into the seat beside me. Up in the ring, Nitro Johnson swelled his chest and posed. The mob's roar had a sudden shrill edge to it. The nigger looked like a giant beside Noonan.

The bell rang.

The Kid crossed himself, turned and walked smoothly out of his corner, both hands at his belt, half clenched, ready to go to work.

Nitro came out snarling and stamping his feet, and he charged half way across the ring to get at the Kid with a crazy lunge. He topped the Kid by a head, and his arms looked as big around as Noonan's legs. His upper lip writhed back from his teeth. He lunged and clubbed. The Kid stepped away. Nitro lunged again, swinging. The Kid slipped inside, rapped the coon in the midriff, and clinched.

The Jersey Kid was giving his show in the Sticks.

It was not a fight—it was a show. The black man outweighed Noonan thirty pounds. He was bigger and stronger. He was berserk mad. He had everything that the Kid had burned out long ago. But the big time had left patterns in the Kid's ring-wise brain. The

Kid followed those patterns in and out, clinching, body-punching, breaking back, stepping in again, clinching. He baited the black boy the way a matador's hired men bait a bull. And the crowd rose to it, roaring.

Just after the bell, the black man took another swing. The Kid stepped under it. He caught the nigger off balance, heeled his left hand on the black shoulder, turned Nitro around and gave him a shove. The mob's yell touched hysteries. The Kid looked at the ringside indifferently.

Johnson came out for the second with another crazy rush, winging punches from all angles. The Kid, cagey-eyed, broke back. He slipped along the ropes. He made the black boy chase him—he was flirting with dynamite every inch of the way, but he ran the nigger dizzy. And in the first fraction of a second when the fury faltered, he stepped inside, belted the coon in the body and clinched.

When the Kid hit, he hurt. I could see that. He hit short and sharp. But he didn't step in and try to knock the coon cold. He hit when he saw a clean chance, but he hit just hard enough to give the nigger something to think about.

It went on that way. It went into the third round, and on into the fourth. Several times the Kid blocked a punch that sagged him with the weight of it. The black man threw punches that would have cracked the Kid in two, but the Kid slipped them or rode them or stepped inside them. In the clinches the Kid went limp, bearing down on the black man's arms, spoiling his leverage. The frown of his crooked eyebrow made Noonan look thoughtful, intent, unworried.

"How long can he keep it up?" I yelled to Pop. I had to shout again, on account of the mob's noise. Pop jerked his head at me. "How the hell do I know?" he yelled back.

In the intermissions, Pop squeezed out a sponge on the Kid's chest, and the Mex worked his legs over. Pop sponged the Kid's tongue, talked to him.

Once in the fifth, when Johnson clubbed him with kidney punches, the Kid reached over deliberately and clubbed the nigger. It got a yell from the mob. The Kid looked out over Johnson's shoulder without a flicker of expression. Johnson wrestled him. The Kid broke, then stepped in again fast and smashed the black man square in the mouth. The coon went hog-wild, but the Kid rode while Nitro wrestled him and the ref dived in to pry them apart.

Then, still in the fifth, the black man swung a roundhouse left that caught the Kid high on the temple and spun him into the ropes. The nigger jumped in to follow up. Instinct, those patterns in the Kid's brain, jerked Noonan's left straight into the coon's face. The Kid was dizzy from the swing, but when the black head bounced, the Jersey Kid stepped in with a right-hand smash that set Nitro back on his heels. The mob's yell went up in a crazy spiral. The mob got to its feet.

But the Kid clinched. Johnson, crazy mad, beginning to bleed at the lips, heeled the Kid in that clinch. The Kid jerked his face out of it, reached up a fist and heeled the nigger—hard.

It was his way of throwing the fear of Madison Square Garden into the big black boy. The coon began to dog it. The Kid's legs were shaking when the round ended, but he stood in his corner for a couple of seconds, just to show that he was not hurt. He adjusted his trunks calmly. He sat down and let Pop give him the sponge.

But in the next round, the sixth, the Kid's timing slipped a cog. The Kid began to crack. Early in the round the coon caught him with a swinging right just above that crooked eyebrow of his, a punch that spun him and sprawled

him to the floor. Johnson stamped and swung, but the referee waved him back. The ref picked up the count. The Kid squatted on one knee. He shook his head. He took "Eight," and got up.

His left hand into Johnson's rush was automatic, but it was more of a shove than a punch—and his right hand missed. Nitro mauled in, swinging for a knockout, but the Kid got away. He back-pedaled, unsteady. The coon reached him finally with a banging right hand to the head.

Pop Quigley was standing up, clutching a claw into my arm. The ringside was a madhouse.

Noonan sagged on the ropes. He whipped out a couple of punches from somewhere, lashed at the coon's middle, and Nitro broke ground. The Kid dived into a clinch. He looked over at his corner while Nitro wrestled him. The Jersey Kid's eyes were steady and his face was the same dead-pan mask. But he knew what was coming.

He lasted through the round. At the end, after the bell rang, Johnson clubbed at him, not hearing the bell or not caring. The Kid shoved the heel of his glove under Johnson's chin and gave him one more deliberate smash in the mouth. The referee got into them, shoved them apart.

THE yelling went on. The mob stood up, hammered on the floor. There was a smear of red on the Kid's forehead, plastering that left eyebrow, and his legs were shaky. He watched Johnson go to his corner before he turned to his own. He was still the big time, and he wanted the nigger to know it. He sat down in his corner, leaned back, and Pop gave him the salts. The mob's yell hammered at the white-hot ring lamps, and the Kid stared up at them. He shook his head at something Pop said to him.

Jersey Kid Noonan's show in the Sticks was almost over.

The lights flashed "Round 7." The bell rang. The Kid went out to take it.

He stalled off the black man't first rush. Johnson clubbed and hammered, but the Kid stayed in close. His feet dragged in the clinches, but he stayed in. The nigger mauled him around the ring, jabbering with buck fever. The old cut opened up, and the smear blackened, but something still clicked in the Jersey Kid's punch-hammered head. He slipped in, clinched and hung on.

Perhaps a minute went by. Then the nigger landed.

Swinging his right hand again, he caught Noonan under the heart, buckled him up and dumped him to the canvas.

The Kid still followed the count. He took "Nine," got up, tried to circle away, but his legs were going. The crowd's uproar had the blood-yell in it—a high, keening yell, shrilling at the ears. The ring was a white haze.

Pop clutched the towel away from Blackie Pancho. Johnson's right hand caught the Kid high on the cheek, tumbled him sidewise into the ropes. The Kid thudded to one knee. Pop raised the towel.

But the Jersey Kid got up without a count.

The shock of that punch blurred the crafty patterns in the Kid's head, stripped him down to the last thing he had left—the last red ember of the fighting man's cruel fire. His white mask of a face, blotched from the cut, came to life suddenly. It was fierce and hot and intent.

He lashed out at the black man—lashed again. The black man broke back. His eyes were wide and startled. He took one uncertain step. The Jersey Kid stumbled in and threw his right hand.

At the crack of that impact, the black man floundered back, sank to his haunches, his hands on the canvas. He stared up at the Kid.

In that hell of noise, in the haze of

smoke and the glare of the ring lamps, the coon's look slumped into a stupid, blank wonder. The Kid wavered, clutching at the ropes to hold himself up. His arms were dead. His hands were heavy. But the blur in that tired, ring-wise head of his cleared ever so slightly, and he did the one thing there was left to do. He grinned at Nitro Johnson. He beckoned.

What the coon saw was a sudden grin where there had been that dead-pan, indifferent mask. Hurt, stupid, looking up from the canvas, he saw the white boy grin at him—grin, and beckon him to get up and take it.

Nitro went limp, rolled over, sprawled face down on the spattered canvas. He was through.

The big time had licked him.

Pop and I got the Jersey Kid back to the hotel by eleven, but the Kid was very tired. Collodion hadn't stopped the bleeding from his cut, and he held a handkerchief to it. In the lobby of the Metropole, people crowded around, patting him on the back, shaking his hand, looking at the blood-splotched handkerchief and telling him what to do about a cut over the eye. But the Kid was very tired. His lips were puffed, and it was hard for him to smile.

Pop got him through the crowd and up to the room. I carried the satchel. The Metropole house physician showed up, smelling of hard liquor, and patched the cut.

When the doctor had gone, I said something about going across the street to the Bohemia, but the Jersey Kid looked blank.

"No," he said, "I'm kind of tired. I'm going to hit the hay."

Pop said: "We'll just set around the room a little while. Then maybe you'll want to run out for a bit to eat. Ain't you hungry?"

"No," the Kid said, "I'm going to hit the hay. I'm tired."

He took off his coat very slowly and hung it on a chair. He sat down on the bed and began to fumble at his tie. His hands were heavy and swollen. "Besides," he said, "the way I am now, who the hell would want to see me?"

So Pop and I left without him.

"Yeh," Pop kept saying. "Who th' hell would? Who th' hell would?"

We went a couple of blocks up the street for our coffee. We didn't stop at the Bohemia, because Pop didn't want to see Catherine again, either.

"You don't like it, *petite cochone?*" he asked. "Then you're more of a lady than the one that just walked out on me."

SALUTE

By KINGSLEY MOSES and CURTIS THOMAS

LEGIONNAIRE BILL Kennedy stared at himself in the mirror behind the bar. The whole of Fez and most of Morocco found itself reflected, at one time or another, in this mirror of the Café de la Renaissance. Kennedy scowled. The cap thrust back on his damp straw-colored hair revealed the white, untanned forehead with its bright blue eyes above cheeks and jaw burned black as an Arab's—but it was not the face that received his full attention. It was the welt of a yellow-blue bruise, with its scalloping of rawly sliced flesh running diagonally from chin to right temple that he regarded fixedly. He raised his calloused hand to the right eyebrow that had been cut precisely in half. A glint of hot blue fire shot into his eyes and he uttered a pungent American curse, for Legionnaire Kennedy had had a riding crop laid across his face, not so long before.

One day, not too far distant, Legionnaire Kennedy would kill Lieutenant von Amstel—when he got a good chance.

He gulped his absinthe and turned from the bar, his attention diverted from this moment of self scrutiny by more immediate matters. Just in from the *bled* with five hundred francs of accumulated pay intact in his breast pocket,

and ten months of accumulated hell-raising in the heart beneath it, he was bent upon a celebration. At dawn, he would be picked out of a gutter and consigned to jail for fifteen days. The prospect was a pleasant one—far too pleasant to be indulged in, alone.

Out there, beyond the doorway, a flash of red silk attracted his attention—a girl sitting alone. He could see her deep brown eyes, the golden brown skin; nothing of the native about *her*. Her small head was turned sideways, the provocative chin brushing a rosily white shoulder.

"A man could fall for her," Kennedy muttered to himself and ambled towards the door.

What if his face wasn't pretty? An honourable wound! The regiment was just in from a tough campaign in the deserts of the Tafilalet. Everyone in Fez knew that.

Consciously, therefore, he posed in the doorway. Let her have a good look. Deliberately, he thrust his cap still further back on his head and stared at the well filled tables set out beneath the broad awning on the pavement before the café.

He vaguely remembered the girl in red. Mariette, they called her—alone, as she generally was. Expensive looking. He patted the pocket of his tunic. Five hundred francs wasn't chicken feed. His hobnails tramped across the pavement. He sat himself down comfortably opposite her. "Howdy, sister."

Her brown eyes, extraordinarily beautiful, were not at all kind. "Who smacked your face, soldier?" she said, with hardly a trace of accent.

"Flat of a Touareg knife. Slipped in his hand when I plugged him. Lucky." It made a fair enough yarn. "What you drinkin', kid?"

Her eyes slowly traveled down his long, strong, awkward body. She stared, then, steadily at his boots. That always makes a man nervous. He scuffed the dust of his boot toes against his puttees. His hands, he realized, could have been a lot cleaner too.

Perhaps not consciously, he reworded his invitation. After all, he could scour his tongue of the broad Americanisms which this woman did not find particularly amusing. "What will *mademoiselle* drink?"

Her eyes rose to the glass she already twisted in her fingers. "I am already drinking. But—"

His hand covered hers and tipped over the drink, smearing it across the clean table.

"What will *mademoiselle* drink?" he repeated.

"The same," she answered lifting her shoulders slightly and withdrawing her hand.

"Two of—the same," said Kennedy to the waiter who had appeared and was mopping up the smear on the table. He unbuttoned the flap of his breast pocket, drew out a sheaf of bank-notes. "You have been long in Fez?" he asked, counting the money.

"Long enough."

"I hope you'll change your mind now that I'm in town," he answered.

For the first time, she turned her head, slowly, and counted the notes in his fingers with cool dark eyes. She did not answer but watched him pay for the drinks that the waiter set before them. "Why are you paying now?" she asked. "Later would do."

"Been in this dump long enough," he said pleasantly. Now that she had seen his money, he felt easier with Mariette.

She glanced at the illuminated clock that stood above the tables and made a little gesture of impatience. "I've been here too long." She lifted her glass and drained it. "I'm going now," she said, setting it down. Kennedy stood up as she pushed back her chair. "Goodbye," she added.

She walked along the street but he stayed beside her. In silence they pro-

ceeded towards the Café du Maroc where there was dancing. At the door, Mariette turned. "I still say—good-bye."

"I still say—nothing," answered Kennedy, grinning down at her.

"Then there is no cause for an argument," she said turning away. But he followed her to the bar inside where he sat down beside her.

"What will you drink?" he asked, pulling out his money again.

She shot him a sudden angry glance. "The same, and it will be the same all night, till you have spent your handful of tips!"

Kennedy turned over the money in his fingers. "Five hundred francs is more than a handful of tips."

He began to feel discouraged. He took out a hundred-franc note from the others and handed it to the barmaid. "Here is fifty francs for you and give *mademoiselle* here, fifty francs worth of —the same." He tipped his cap over his eyes, leaned forward on his elbows and ordered absinthe, which he drank in silence without glancing again towards Mariette.

He was conscious, however, that she grew restless as the minutes went by. She kept comparing the time of her little wrist watch with that of the battered brass clock over the bar and she shoved her glass about in little circles over the wet patches the barmaid had spilled when she set the glass down. Another five minutes and she was gone.

KENNEDY continued to sit at the bar. In true legionnaire fashion, he told himself it didn't matter that she had gone—technically, nothing does matter to a legionnaire. There were other women in Fez. And yet—he watched the barmaid mop up the rings that Mariette's glass had left on the counter, he watched her turn away and rattle among the bottles—the barmaid was another of the women in Fez. She turned round and smiled broadly at Bill. He flung ten francs down and walked away.

He was furious with himself that the barmaid was dull! He felt that something had gone decidedly wrong with him. He, Legionnaire Bill Kennedy, on his first night back from the *bled* finding the barmaid dull! He felt vaguely ashamed and not a little furious with Mariette—to hell with her!

Coming out the door, Kennedy was tripped by a rope and as he pitched forward, he heard a loud squeal drowned in a roar of laughter. Bewildered by the fall, he turned his head and swore vivaciously—he was never too bewildered to swear—and his nose all but encountered the pink snout of a pig, a young boar. Round the animal's neck was a rope, the rope that had tripped him: at the other end of the rope was a Swedish legionnaire guffawing drunkenly. Beside the Swede were a Chinaman, a Greek and a Russian, all in uniforms of the legion and in various stages of mirth. He knew them all and greeted them with a surprising list of family names in four languages, none of which was native to his listeners. But they understood the major part of what he said, admiring the subtleties which escaped them, and pulled him to his feet with offers of a drink.

"I don't think much of your sister's figure," Kennedy answered, eyeing the pig as he dusted himself, "but I'll let anybody buy me a drink."

His temper quieted as they marched him off down the street, singing disjointedly. Next fringes of pepper-trees hung against the lighted windows of the modern French shops—it was a pleasant evening. He found himself back at the Café de la Renaissance, presently, where they siezed a table just vacated by an officer and ordered *demies-blondes*. It never occurred to a legionnaire that absinthe and beer did not mix particularly well.

Kennedy recognized the waiter who had served him when he had been with Mariette. When the Swede had ordered, he added, "And one of—the same!" The waiter remembered what Mariette had been drinking and when he brought it along with the beers, Billy picked up the pig by its fat stomach, set it in a chair, and to the enormous satisfaction of everyone but the suckling boar, poured the liquid into its squealing, gnashing snout. "You don't like it, *petite cochone?*" he said in surprise as the little red eyes rolled. "Then you're more of a lady than the one that just walked out on me."

It was presumably this statement that confirmed Kennedy's liking for the pig for presently he began to dicker with the Swede for its possession. The Chinaman, the Greek and the Russian joined in the bargaining, claiming a share of the proceeds since they had taken their turns in marching the beast all the way from the cedar forests of Ito to Fez. It was the Swede who got twenty francs from Kennedy, however, since his idiotic guffaws thoroughly smothered every vestige of the acuteness he really possessed.

The four men drifted away while Kennedy sat on, feeling that he wanted to be alone with his new friend. In his present mood, he wanted to set about forgetting Mariette, by himself. With the passing of time—and of glasses—his blue eyes gleamed brighter and brighter while the red little eyes of the pig rolled as he gnashed his teeth and snorted. The crowded tables about them buzzed and roared with the conversation and laughter of a score of races: the sea of faces rose about him as with a tide of forgetfulness and, after half an hour's consistent drinking, Kennedy found himself patting the pig absently and wondering what it was he had set out to forget.

A woman's voice cut through his reverie, coming from the middle of the street before the café. The bitterness of the voice lifted it above the casual conversations of the crowd about him. Even before he glimpsed Mariette's red dress, he knew that it was she who was speaking. She was talking to an officer and, though his back was towards Kennedy, the legionnaire recognized Lieutenant von Amstel, at once.

Lieutenant von Amstel was looking very smart in his blue uniform with his cap of maroon velvet and gold braid. Under one arm, he carried a short riding crop covered with leather. Its gold head protruded between the heavy shoulder-blade and the powerful arm of the officer as though he had been stuck in the back. Kennedy looked at the close-cut blond hair that bristled on the lieutenant's heavy neck and remembered it against the desert sky when the Touaregs had ambushed the battalion and von Amstel had drawn his company up the sand dune against heavy firing, miraculously dodging death and had turned the attack. Lieutenant von Amstel was turning slowly about, now, disregarding Mariette's vituperations. Kennedy rose to his feet to salute. He picked up the pig as he did so and, holding it under one arm, saluted von Amstel. He forced the pig's elbow into a crude but not too obvious salute.

Von Amstel looked at Kennedy and at the pig as he returned the salute. He glanced sideways at Mariette who had stopped speaking and was drumming her heel angrily on the dusty roadway. Then von Amstel spoke so distinctly that Kennedy did not miss a word. "We soldiers pick strange companions in Fez!" He turned on his heel but before he could walk away, Kennedy had come up beside him, his dislike of the officer spurring him on to a sudden encounter.

He looked into von Amstel's face and the grip of his arm on the pig made it squeal. "If I didn't like my pig so well," he said, "I'd suggest that we trade companions." Von Amstel saw the blue glitter in Kennedy's eyes.

The officer's fingers tightened round his riding crop and the muscles of his heavy jaw stood out sharply; but he was a man whose iron discipline applied to himself as well as his men. He balanced his stick thoughtfully. "Haven't you had enough of this, soldier?" he asked in a flat voice; raising opaque, expressionless eyes that fastened on the welt disfiguring Kennedy's face.

He tapped the piglet across the snout sharply, turned right about and walked away. Before Kennedy could regain control of his squeaking, kicking pet, the officer was out of sight in strolling crowd.

Kennedy stepped back to his chair and slumped down inert, the pig dropping into the seat beside him. For a moment he was blind, impotent with anger. There wasn't anything in the world; no present, no future. Nothing; except so terribly vividly the picture of what had happened only three weeks ago.

Awesome, white-wrapped figures rising among the sand dunes; terrible tribesmen with blue sand veils hiding their faces; his own platoon surprised, staggering at the ragged salvo. Men down all round; some prone, more writhing. Ten—twenty of them scuttling away.

Bill had tried to follow them. But von Amstel was at his elbow. The lieutenant's hard left hand gripping had spun him about. "Stay with me and fight!"

He had heard the whine of the bullets; even remembered how he had felt the spurts of sand spatter his face. There in that sandy punch bowl, von Amstel and he were surrounded. Beyond, men fought hand to hand, knife and bayonet. But just here in this hidden trough there was, for this moment, only himself and von Amstel—and a dozen Touaregs.

"Fight, *mon lieutenant!*" Kennedy had abjectly gasped. "Surrender! They want ransom money. They're greedy. They—"

"You fight, dog!" von Amstel had said. A blinding slash of the riding crop stung across his face. "I'll take your rifle!" Through the lightning of the pain, the harsh voice had cracked like thunder. "The dead have left one for you—*salopard!*"

That was all that had happened. On their knees, they had faced the savages, shooting for the belly. Five Touaregs had gone down; the rest fled, sweeping back. At the peak of the highest dune then, a sharp target against the sky, von Amstel had rallied the rest of his thin platoon.

His men, at the night's bivouac, had talked of their lieutenant as a hero, grudgingly. "You have to hand it to him," said the only other American in the outfit. "And you'll get the *croix* yourself, like as not, Bill."

So had been born the convenient "flat of the Touareg knife" story.

There had been no official contradiction.

NOW, with his pig on the terrace, it came sluggishly to Kennedy that his "honorable" wound was hotly smarting again. All his blood seemed in his head, throbbing. He swore foully.

"*Non, non, mon gars,*" someone said gently; even tenderly.

Mariette, still standing in the street, was staring at Kennedy's thoughtful face.

"May I sit down with you?" she asked.

He turned gravely to the pig and said, "Do you mind—just for a moment, my dear?"

The pig squealed selfishly but Kennedy stood up, dumping the animal to the ground, and motioned Mariette into the vacated chair. Her lips were thin and her eyes calculated narrowly as she watched Kennedy sit down again. She opened her handbag and Billy peered into it. In the strong glare of the lamp, he saw a flash of silver.

Mariette, glancing over her shoulder, said in a low voice, "Look!"

For a brief instant, he saw a Moorish dagger, its blade inlaid with gold, its silver handle designed curiously with twining arabesques. He nodded and called a waiter. "Two of—the same!" he said.

"Wait!" said Mariette. "I am changing my drink. May I have champagne?"

He glanced at the pig who was braced on all four feet, its head hung down gloomily, still squealing like a toy. "Perhaps it would be better if we ate something," he said. Something told him it would not be wise to drink champagne with Mariette. Already this girl with her slim figure in its red dress and black, vivacious eyes had led him into trouble. He knew that he meant nothing to her at all, personally, and her sudden friendliness had a certain menace beneath it. Then there was that dagger in her bag. No, decidedly he must not order her champagne.

"You should be an officer!" said Mariette, shutting her handbag and sitting back, angry at this rebuff where she had expected complete acquiescence. "Like von Amstel."

"Eh? What's that?" demanded Bill.

Mariette bit her lip and put down her bag again. "You don't want me to drink with you? I had thought—" She started to rise.

His face clouded a little, a shadow deepened in his blue eyes and he stopped petting the pig suddenly. He wanted her to stay.

Mariette looked at him and a little laugh rose in her throat as she saw that wavering in his eyes. She stretched out her hand impulsively and took his. "I had to learn to hate von Amstel before I could learn to like you," she said.

He looked at her incredulously but her smile captivated him. "Two very easy things to do," he commented. "Try something hard for a change." He ordered champagne. Mariette laughed, but perversely enough, when the champagne arrived, she drank very little of it, and Kennedy drank a great deal.

"Why did you come back to me?" he asked suddenly.

"I told you," said Mariette, fingering her bag. "I learned to like you."

Kennedy nodded and sipped champagne. It sounded good, but his head was spinning a little. "I remember you said that."

Mariette looked down at the little pig. She wondered if anything short of hydrochloric acid would intoxicate this tough young man with blue eyes and a pig. "You said yourself that it was very easy to hate von Amstel."

"It's easy for his soldiers to hate him," Kennedy suggested.

She nodded. "I'll take your word for that. I tell you it's easy for his women to hate him, too."

"He doesn't sound popular."

"It's surprising he's lived as long as he has," Mariette went on, taking a handkerchief from her bag. Kennedy saw again the gleam of the knife.

"We soldiers say that death hates him, too."

She looked up at him quickly. "But not so much as I! How I hate the man!" She replaced the handkerchief, covering the dagger. Kennedy returned her glance for a moment, then finished his glass of champagne.

"What do you want me to do?" he asked.

Mariette leaned forward and took his hand. Her eyes held his and she saw the faint unsteadiness in their bright blueness. "I want you to love me," she said very softly.

He nodded without the slightest change of expression. "You want me to love you." He glanced down at the pig and patted it, then looked back at her. "What do you want me to do?"

Her fingers tightened on his hand. "I want you to get me five thousand francs."

The cynical gleam in his eye wavered. "Five thousand francs," he repeated softly. He returned the pressure of her hand and smiled. "It is very nice to have a woman ask me for five thousand francs. It is nice to know a woman who thinks she is worth that to me." He leaned closer; the champagne was loosening his tongue. "Mariette, I should like to give you five thousand francs, and since you ask so much, I should like to double it and give you ten. I want to give you five times ten-thousand, anything, but—" he kissed her very suddenly, a hard, sensuous kiss, and drew back—"I have only what's left of five hundred francs!" He threw it on the table in front of her.

She looked at him, disregarding the money with her eyes. "I knew from the first how much you had to offer me, in money," she said, smiling slowly and tilting back her head.

"And I know how much you have to offer me, in love," he answered, leaning close again. "What do you want me to do?" His eyes were looking deep inside her, unwavering and possessive. It seemed incredible that this woman wanted him when he had—nothing to offer in return.

"I want you to kill von Amstel for me," she said, holding his glance, "and bring me the five thousand francs in his pocketbook."

Five thousand francs! He wondered if many people knew about that.

For a moment he did not change expression, then as swiftly as he had kissed her, as swiftly as he had released her and thrown the money on the table, he now turned away, snapped his fingers like a man who has lost a throw of dice, and finished his champagne. His pride was hurt. For a brief, romantic moment, he had been silly enough to think that she wanted him though he had nothing to offer her that she considered of value.

She went on, softly. "You told me that I was worth five thousand francs to you. Am I not worth the life of a man whom you hate?"

He looked away. "It's a man's life against a woman's love." He shook his head. "Both pretty damn cheap—here." He continued to shake his head. "It must be the climate."

HE was perfectly willing to kill von Amstel. It was the only way out for him if he didn't want to suffer bitter persecution during his remaining three years of service. It was an obvious necessity. It seemed, as he continued shaking his head, to become an immediate necessity. He was perfectly willing to hand Mariette five-thousand francs with the life of her lover, but—Kennedy had become a little sentimental and maudlin about Mariette—he wished that he had nothing to offer her but himself.

Mariette licked her lips and her hand trembled slightly on the bag she held. She didn't know quite what to do with Kennedy now that she had committed herself. She had expected to beat down his conscience with liquor and the promise of her love and she found that his conscience was a negligible quantity, indeed.

She raised her eyebrows and drew a long breath, catching at his hands with sudden intensity. "It is very simple," she said quickly. "Tonight, von Amstel gave me the Moorish dagger you have seen, one he had taken from a dead chieftain in the Tafilalet, and he kept his five thousand francs."

"You want to exchange the knife for the money?" asked Kennedy.

She nodded. "It is an exchange you can make very easily." She glanced over her shoulder then raised her lips close to his ear. "Now that I have quarelled with von Amstel, he will go to a certain house in the Batha near the Hopital Auvert—do you know the place?" Kennedy nodded. "Von Amstel is a very methodical person, as you know. He

will leave that house at three o'clock and return towards camp by the road winding past Bab Djedid. He will be alone, you understand. It is a lonely road where officers have been attacked before now for smaller sums than five thousand francs. I used to warn him of a native ambush, but he only laughed and said the prestige of an officer was a better safe-conduct than an armed escort. He would not listen to my warnings."

Her hand closed on the bag. "This Moorish dagger will establish the murder easily as the work of thieves. Furthermore, if you stamp upon his face, as the Arabs do with their victims, it will leave no doubt that he was ambushed by natives.

"Afterward, you can take his money, hide it somewhere along the road, some crevice in the old wall, perhaps, and return for it, later, when everything is safe." She drew closer to him and smiled "Then you may bring me the money and, for once in my life, I can love a poor man!"

Kennedy stared down at her. The champagne was singing in his ears. Slowly he began to grin and reaching out, took her chin in his hand. "I've fallen out with von Amstel and I've fallen in with you, Mariette." He chuckled. He withdrew his hand and rose slowly. "Will you walk down the road a bit with me?"

Mariette smiled at him and got up. "After all, I can't give you the dagger here," she said and took his arm. Kennedy stooped and picked up the rope fastened to the pig and the three of them walked off round the corner, the pig's little legs vibrating swiftly after their slow pacing.

It was a long time before Kennedy got the dagger, it was nearly two o'clock, but he still had an hour to spend and went on with the pig, gently progressing towards the house in the Batha. He paused at a café in the Mellah. At Bou Jeloud, he stopped again and by half-past two he was drunk—really drunk. A rapid succession of *fines* had washed his brain with fire, consuming every thought but one, he must be at the bridge by Bab Djedid at three!

He flung down the next to the last of his hundred-franc notes, lurched against the table, upsetting it on the pig, dragged the furious animal from the wreckage and wallowed off along the road of the Batha, his head down and that one thought flaming in it—the bridge of Bab Djedid at three! Head down, pig squealing behind him, he went past the house near the Hopital Auvert, and the Hopital Auvert itself, out a gate where the watchman slept and turned down the long hill that led towards Bab Djedid and its bridge. Ahead of him shuffled a group of natives. He disregarded them, disregarded everything. He plunged on between the rows of trees flung against the moon, the bamboo grass and the flowers hidden in darkness but exhaling their pungent odors through the night.

The road twisted downward towards the bridge and the little pig grew suddenly silent and lagged. Kennedy tugged it forward remorselessly till he turned suddenly into a black thicket by the bridge. He tied the little pig against an olive tree and leaned against its trunk, listening. One thought remained in his dropped head—the bridge of Bab Djedid at three! He was there! His hand slipped inside his tunic and his fingers closed on the slender blade of the Moorish dagger. Slowly he lifted his head, tipped back his cap, and wiped the sweat out of his eyes.

Between the black, broken fingers of the bamboo leaves, he looked back up the hill and set his lips in a grin, waiting.

At last, in the moonlight, drifting up through the black trees that bordered the road, came a little trail of silver dust, advancing down the hill. The little trail of silver dust grew closer. Von

Amstel was taking his three o'clock walk back to camp.

Kennedy warily thumbed the edge of his dagger: sweetly sharp, it was. He put the blade between his teeth, cool to the tip of the tongue. His brown hands pushed against the bamboo branches, parting them gently. Von Amstel drew closer and Kennedy leaned forward to spring.

No. The officer had slanted obliquely to the far side of the road.

As the officer stepped onto the bridge, the legionnaire slipped out of the thicket and followed him. He crept forward, the hob-nails in his boots lisping faintly in the dust, the nails that would obliterate the sharp, hard features of von Amstel. The knob of the swagger-stick gleamed like a target in the moonlight as the officer started down the further slope of the bridge towards the blackness of a thick hedge where the road turned. The legionnaire gained the top of the bridge, then straightened himself to leap forward.

At that moment, however, the pig squealed in the thicket. Von Amstel wheeled about and saw Kennedy behind him. They looked at one another in the moonlight.

Kennedy grinned at von Amstel as he took the knife from his teeth and the officer stepped back a little towards the shadows behind him where the high hedge marked the turn in the road.

But before Kennedy could spring forward or von Amstel could gain the shadows, the hedge came alive!

A half dozen natives were closing in on the lieutenant, unaware of Kennedy's quiet presence on the bridge. *"Balek!"* shouted Kennedy, springing forward. Vaguely he recalled the natives that had preceded him, had waited for him perhaps, or any luckless soldier.

One of the Arabs had already raised his knife against von Amstel, but Kennedy, with the slope of the bridge in his favour, pitched downward and the Moorish dagger that had been destined for the lieutenant's broad back sank into the breast of his Arab assailant. With the deadly thrust of the dagger, Kennedy saw red. His fists crashed against shouting faces; that von Amstel's pistol was cracking, that there were cries and shouting did not matter; only the impact of his fists and the lunging of his weight against struggling bodies, only the tearing and the biting and the kicking meant anything to him. Then he felt a foot behind his ankles and a powerful arm caught him in the throat: he crashed backward and there was a sudden silence. The night went black, without a moon, without a memory.

WHEN next Kennedy was aware of anything at all, it was of dim daylight and a sharp pain. He knew there was daylight somewhere though he couldn't quite open his left eye to make sure. Never had he had such a head! His hands groped cautiously for the wooden plank of the prison bed where he was accustomed to find himself over the weekend. He felt a mattress. He lifted his hand to his head and encountered something large, smooth and soft, instead. It was without features or hair —an egg wrapped in yards of soft cloth. He finally opened his left eye, confirmed the daylight and, through a haze of white bandages, made out the inscrutable face of Lieutenant von Amstel staring down at him. Kennedy tried to salute suddenly, but it didn't work and he shut his left eye again.

It was not till a squeal sounded from beneath him that he recovered consciousness again and began to comprehend that he was in an hospital, that it was the day after he had met Mariette—or *was* it the next day? It might have been the next century! Anyway, he was in an hospital. He could smell the disinfectants and his head was bandaged. The squeal sounded again. Something

bumped his back through the thin mattress.

"I wish to thank you for your timely assistance last evening," he heard a crisp voice in his ear. His left eye was working again. He used it and saw the lieutenant bending over him. "Your strange companion whom I found tethered by the bridge saved my life, first. I have shown my appreciation by giving her a large breakfast. You saved my life, next." Von Amstel lifted a stained Moorish dagger. "I want to return this with my compliments." He laid the dagger in the legionnaire's hand. "Though you used it so nobly in war, last night, I now suggest that you use it equally nobly, in love. I would consider it an excellent gift for a woman."

Kennedy's hand closed on the knife and he grinned among his bandages.

Von Amstel's hard, square face crinkled a little at the corners of the eyes. Its icy solidity was touched with a small pattern of humor. "Wasn't it too bad that our friends stamped on your face before they went away from us!"

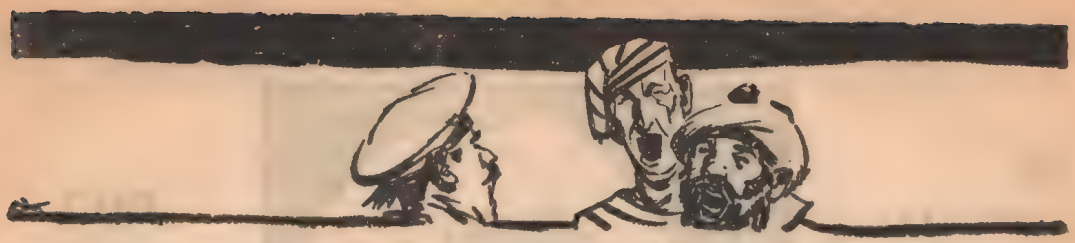
"Oh!" The invalid began to understand the nature of his hangover.

"But you'll be all right tomorrow, *mon brave*," reassured the officer. "*Mon petit!*" He spat on the floor. "Quite fit—or, at least, fit for 'Light Duty.' The surgeon will release you, understand. You will report to my quarters."

"Sir?"

Von Amstel's face relaxed still further, his even teeth baring themselves in a grin. "Just a few little jobs—nothing but 'Light Duty.'"

So, cleaning his lieutenant's boots was the chore Kennedy drew the next morning. And the straw-yellow patches of hair and the bloodied scraps of white skin which stickily adhered to the boot heels did not make the task more tasteful.



CHANTEYS

I HEARD a sailor singing, a long, long time ago,
And a big wind was a'blowing, and down came the snow,
And the wild grey seas were rolling, and a ship was running fast,
And twenty men were hoisting a sail upon a mast,
And you could but barely hear them above the wind and water
As they sang of *Shenandoah and of Shenandoah's daughter.*

I heard a sailor singing, when I was but a lad,
And the sky was dark and lowering and the weather very bad,
For the big hailstones were bouncing, and the wind blew icily,
But that sailor wasn't caring, for he sang so merrily;
And a ship's crew were a'heaving, a'hoisting up the spars,
In the middle of the midnight when there were not any stars,
And you could but barely hear him above the wind and weather,
Or the chorus of his comrades as they laboured all together,
As they hoisted up her topsails, as they drove the ship along,
All a'singing in the darkness of *Old Stormalong.*

And once I heard a young lad, with the laughter in his eyes,
He was singing in the tropics under fair and sunny skies,
But you could see the gallows tree and hear the hang rope creak
As they hoisted up a topsail to that tall ship's lofty peak,
For though he was a young lad, with his face so blithe and bonny,
The chantey he was singing, why, it told of *Hanging Johnnie.*

I heard a sailor singing in a harbour bright and gay
When the dawn wind blew so softly for the breaking of the day,
And you never would have thought that a sailor could get drowned
Had you heard that crew a'roaring out that they were homeward bound,
Rolling home, rolling home, rolling home across the sea,
Rolling home to merrie England, to the land where we would be.

Oh, me, I am a Yankee, and I'm from the state of Maine,
And we're heaving in the anchor for we're off to sea again,
And you can hear us roaring full a long sea mile away
As we take our packet seaward at the ending of the day,
As we sing about a tall ship that is going down a river
With the Stars and Stripes above her and her canvas all a'shiver;
We be dandy Yankee sailors, and we're stamping to and fro,
And the song that we are singing, it is *Blow, boys, blow!*

Ah, what's the use of talking? Those days are past and o'er
And it's no use singing chanteys when you dwell upon the shore!
Oh, whiskey is the life of man! I'll drink whiskey while I can!
And there's a chantey well beloved of any honest sailorman.

—Bill Adams

SECRET AGENT B-7

By ARED WHITE

PART THREE

Fox Elton gave Herr Staubenwasser a significant glance and with indescribable agility the three former members of the Czar's secret police hurled themselves upon the French lieutenant and his sergeant.

"CAPTAIN," said Colonel Rand to the young Intelligence officer, "this document was handed to me a few minutes ago by Marshal Foch himself. It tells the story of Pablo Pozas. He was a deserter from the American Army who joined up with the Mexicans and became a Major. On the way from Mexico City to Berlin on a secret mission he was arrested by the French secret service.

"As you know," the colonel seemed to change the subject, "the Allied command is extremely anxious to discover the state of mind of the people of Germany. The winning of the war depends on it. Here is our opportunity. You will cease to be Captain Fox Elton. You will become Major Pablo Pozas. With his credentials you will proceed to Berlin, there to use your eyes and ears—and to get back as best you can. If you succeed, you will be decorated with the military cross of every Allied nation."

"And if I don't succeed," said Fox Elton, "with the German wooden cross."

Elton's first step was to interview Pozas and from him learn the meeting place of German spies in Paris. It was the flower shop of M. Gobert and there some days later Elton sat across the table from the Prussian agent von Blauzwirn and heard him tell the answer to a riddle that had been puzzling the Allied Intelligence services for days.

"Why is Germany anxious to wipe out the mysterious Zumbush and his friend, the beautiful Babu? We know that he had sworn to kill the King of England and the President of France, but we know also that he is the agent of wealthy and powerful forces that hope to seize and rule all of Europe while it is in

the throes of war. Therefore, it is to the interest of Germany to see that he is killed just as much as to the interest of the United States, for I perceive," said the Prussian, rising, "that you are not Major Pozas but an American agent. Kindly permit me to withdraw."

As Elton drew his pistol and the two came to grips, French secret police, headed by Elton's friend d'Auteuil, broke down the door and Elton was free to proceed into Germany.

Going by way of Switzerland he thought he successfully passed test after test, beginning with the scrutiny of Colonel Sixt von Esch and the attache Dittmar in Lausanne, and ending with that of Herr Major von Keukle in Berlin itself. There he was shown about the city by Herr Staubenwasser of the Imperial Intelligence service and it took but a brief time to learn that the spirit of the German people was about to break. Elton was returning to his hotel to plan his return to Paris when a Prussian stepped in his way.

"Excuse me, Herr Pozas," said his harsh voice in excellent English, "but this hotel is reserved for loyal Germans. If you come with me I will show you the place we have prepared for Yankee spies."

Elton was locked in a steel cage under the rays of a powerful light. Knowing he was under secret observation he spent the night muttering imprecations at the Germans and at his own stupidity in ever leaving Mexico City to come to Berlin. The next day he was released with apologies. His acting had convinced the Germans that he was indeed Pablo Pozas, and they explained their plan for tracking down Zumbusch and the part he was to play in it.

Accompanied by the beautiful Fraulein Gobbin, who traveled as Señora Pozas, Elton set forth on a fictitious honeymoon into Switzerland and from there went to Paris, where at the home of Madame Cuignot in Bagnolet the German spy expedition gathered. Herr Staubenwasser was in charge and introduced Elton to Rascha, Jukow, Savinoff Zastrov and Zeitz, all agents of the late Czar's Okhrana or secret police.

"And there is a sixth Russian whom you have not yet met," said Staubenwasser with a smile of sinister significance.

The party was to receive instructions from an Englishman named Creechwood, but Elton took a night of solitary sightseeing to try to dash to American headquarters and make his report. Just when he thought he was about to succeed, the Russian Savinoff stepped into his taxi. He held a hypodermic loaded with the deadly poison oubain. There was but one thing to do. Elton shot him dead and ordered the frightened driver to take him and the corpse with all speed to the American flying field at Orlay.

CHAPTER XVI

D'Auteuil Spreads a Net

THE American commanding officer at the aviation center of Orlay, outside Paris, debated in wide-eyed uncertainty over the unheard-of situation that called him out of a sound sleep in the dead of night. A slender young man in civilian clothes, with a bullet-riddled Russian in a French taxicab, suggested serious complications with the French police, particularly when the nocturnal visitor demanded that the dead Russian be buried before daybreak and that the French taxicab driver be held a prisoner incommunicado, despite the Frenchman's voluble protests.

Inasmuch as these amazing demands were backed by no better credentials than a vise bearing the name Señor Pozas of the Mexican Army, the aviation colonel finally decided that he could not credit Elton's own terse story of identity and must call the police imme-

diately. Elton, as a last resort, demanded that general headquarters be queried by long distance telephone and Colonel Rand brought from his billet to the wire.

"I am asking for cooperation in a case of the utmost importance," Elton argued, when the colonel hesitated again. "If you report this case to the French police at this time, you will muddle my whole operations as Secret Agent B-7 and jeopardize the arrest of a number of German agents now in Paris. Therefore, unless you wish to call general headquarters, I am in a position to assure you that you will be relieved from duty for failure to cooperate on request with the American Second Section!"

Something in the cool assurance of Elton's voice decided the colonel to play safe, even if it did not convince him.

"Consider yourself under arrest, sir," he exclaimed bad-humoredly. "I'll call Colonel Rand, but I'll keep you under close guard while we're waiting."

"Thank you very much, colonel," Elton responded. "Now while we're waiting, I request the use of a lighted room and a typewriter. Also that you hold a plane ready to take what I write to headquarters—for delivery to Marshal Foch."

"All right—in the personnel shack," muttered the colonel. "But it sounds to me more like a case for a padded cell." He turned to his adjutant and gave instructions. "When you get Colonel Rand, I'll do the talking. See that this man is kept under close guard—and wake me the minute Chaumont answers."

Elton, oblivious to four men with sidearms in the room, diligently hammered the keys of an Army typewriter. He estimated that by the time Chaumont could be reached by telephone and Colonel Rand brought from his billet two hours or more must elapse, time enough to complete his report of the mission to Berlin. He lost no time in setting down fact and observation, the words of the momentous report he had rehearsed on the long ride through Germany to Berne.

Rand had not called when the report was finally completed, a few minutes after three o'clock. He checked it over carefully and made a few minor corrections, his blood warming in satisfaction.

The report left nothing to the imagination. A document of narrative and fact that revealed the real Germany, Germany at the breaking point with her Imperial masters, Germany ready for peace at any price. No doubt the other Allied agents who had gone into the industrial centers would find the same story—if they succeeded in getting through.

And the Allied generalissimo, Marshal Foch, could forge the final thunderbolts that would shatter the Imperial Frankenstein into collapse before the end of the year.

He sealed the report for delivery by airplane and turned to the problem of Herr Staubenwasser. The Prussian agent's sixth Russian no longer could defeat the success of his mission. As soon as Rand called, the report would be in the air, roaring into Hanlon field in the first glow of the rising sun. There remained only the trick of trapping Staubenwasser and his spy cavalcade at Bagnolet.

The aviation colonel stalked in.

"Colonel Rand is on the telephone," he said, almost politely. "He wishes to speak with you at once. The connection is in my headquarters."

If the aviation colonel had dilated upon the dead Russian and Elton's strange demands, there was only one thought in Colonel Rand's mind at sound of his star assistant's voice.

"It's really you, Elton," he shouted. "Did you get—what you went after!"

"Yes, sir. Everything, and more," Elton replied.

"Then, in the name of heaven, climb into a plane and report here as quick as you know how!" Rand cried. "I'll wait up for you—I'll call the Chief of Staff—"

"I've just completed my detailed report, sir. It covers everything. If you will instruct Orlay to furnish a plane, the report will reach you by daylight!"

"Great work, Elton! Great work! You're made, captain, made! Not another man of them got through—we got the report they were all picked up—and shot! We've been worried sick about you. You'll go to lunch a major. How soon will you be here?"

"Thanks, colonel. But I've got some unfinished business down here. May take a few days, but I'll report in as soon as possible."

"Unfinished business, hell! What you talking about?"

"Some interesting visitors in Paris, sir. I need time to close a little net."

"Turn it over to the Deuxieme Bureau after you get here, Elton. If you're in a mood for more action, there's plenty of it waiting for you here. The Deuxieme Bureau is all stirred up over that old case you were working on when we sent you to Berlin. That Zumbusch needs attention—and I've promised l'Ourcq some more help."

"What's Zumbusch been up to now, sir?"

"I'll give you the details soon as I see you, Elton. The telephone isn't—"

"But—this private wire is safe enough, sir—and I'd like to be mulling the thing over. Maybe I could—"

"Two attempts have been made to murder the President of France! Clemenceau nearly got nipped by a sniper's bullet north of Fere en Tradenois last week! Zumbusch has got so bold he's sending threatening letters from Amsterdam—and we've got reason to believe the Russians are financing him from Switzerland. What's worse, nobody's been able to get the slightest trace of Zumbusch's location, or that of his nest in Amsterdam, although his messages have been picked up in half a dozen places in France. That's the general situation, Elton. I'll give you details when you get here."

Elton sat in stone silence, the receiver glued to his ear, his mind swiftly calculating this new complication of Herr Staubenwasser's spy invasion and the shadowy Zumbusch. Colonel Rand's irritated insistence that the headquarters operator had cut the connection prematurely finally roused him.

"I've a few little requests, sir," he spoke up. "Will you instruct the commanding officer here to bury a dead Russian and hold a Frenchman prisoner for a few days, incommunicado?"

"Yes, if you say it's absolutely necessary. But what's it all about, anyhow?"

"The Russian is an enemy agent—call it suicide if you wish. There's nothing against the Frenchman except his tongue whose waggling right now might be dangerous. Release him in three days—and pay him two thousand francs damages. I'll explain later. Another thing, I'd like to work on this Zumbusch case in my own way—without the knowledge of the Deuxieme Bureau."

"Whatever you wish, Elton. But we can discuss that at breakfast. I'm not going to sit here all night on the telephone."

"Thank you again, colonel. I'll be up as soon as possible—and if I should be delayed you can be sure it's in a good cause."

Elton finally managed to turn the receiver over to the aviation colonel for instructions. He remained at Orlay another hour to see that the Russian was interred, the Frenchman locked up and the gory taxicab concealed in an empty hangar. Then he talked the colonel into sending him by auto to the Porte de Bercy, whence he proceeded afoot into Paris and hailed a passing cab on the Boulevard Massena. He stopped at a small café for a bottle of wine and glass of cognac, neither of which he wanted, and drove to Bagnolet.

The sun was rising over Paris when

he dismissed the cabman at the entrance of Madame Cuignot's villa and walked to the door in the manner of a man who has been making a night of it in Paris. A sleepy butler admitted him. Elton had expected Staubenwasser, aroused long since by Elton's long absence and the sudden disappearance of the dependable Savinoff. But the servant bowed him to his room through a house that appeared soundly asleep.

Elton removed coat, collar and shoes and turned in, grateful for the opportunity to compose himself and analyze the quick shift of events that had come out of his talk with Colonel Rand. That tangled skein of the elusive Herr Zumbusch was now back in his own lap. And he was conscious of a lessened tension, a new enthusiasm for this adventure of Herr Staubenwasser.

Did not the quest of Zumbusch demand that he continue on to Amsterdam with Staubenwasser? He put the question aside without final answer. That would depend, in some degree, upon developments yet to occur. For one thing, upon what suspicions came to Staubenwasser out of Savinoff's disappearance.

In minute detail he reenacted the night's events. Staubenwasser doubtless had entrusted Savinoff alone to Elton's trail. There had been no hint of other shadows. And Elton convinced himself that the tragedy of Savinoff now was securely masked behind the official silence of the aviation center at Orlay.

He wondered at his own concern at the death of that Russian. It was the first time in his career overseas that he had been forced to take a human life. Many spies he had trapped, but always retribution had been visited upon them by the French. Yet Savinoff had left him no conceivable alternative. It had been Savinoff's life or his—with only that split second in which he had fired to determine the issue.

In line of duty—in self-defence, he told himself, and dismissed the tragedy.

FROM a fitful sleep into which he had fallen Elton was awakened by a servant with his breakfast. A glance at his watch told him it was not yet ten o'clock, which hinted at the imminent presence of Herr Staubenwasser. He had barely finished his breakfast when the Russian Zastrov came in, his face expressionless.

"Monsieur Boisdeffre requests that you report to him at once," Zastrov said in French. "I will wait to escort you, but you will please hurry."

Despite the Russian's effort at unconcern, Elton caught the tension behind Zastrov's mask, a metallic glitter in the fellow's eyes that was eloquent of complications. He dressed quickly and went with Zastrov, expecting to face Staubenwasser in Madame Cuignot's drawing room. But the Russian led the way to a rear door of the villa, out through the gardens into a woods and through that to a dirt road in which a taxicab was waiting. Zastrov gave the driver instructions in Russian.

Through a tangled labyrinth of obscure roads the cab took them northeast from Bagnolet into a main highway Paris—Le Havre, then after twenty kilometers northward, turned into country roads to the west and finally brought up in the garden of a small country villa south and west of Davagne on the Paris-Le Havre railway. Elton asked no questions, Zastrov offered no information. Staubenwasser obviously had shifted his rendezvous overnight.

Any doubt as to whether that shift was caused by caution or active suspicion was removed from Elton's mind as he entered the villa. Staubenwasser and his group of agents were assembled in a large living room, their faces set and stolid. In the glum silence that greeted Elton's arrival, he sensed an atmosphere surcharged with hostility. Staubenwasser finally spoke without rising, a sneer playing across his thin mouth.

"If we have disturbed your sleep at

Bagnolet, Herr Pozas," he said in German, "perhaps it is only to accord you a much longer one."

"I am at your service, Herr Staubenwasser," Elton replied coolly, looking about among them. "But I hardly understand the welcome I am accorded here."

"Perhaps we can accord you a better welcome if you can explain all that has happened since we came to Paris!" Staubenwasser rejoined. "Savinoff is missing—of which fact you must have some knowledge."

"I was not instructed, Herr Staubenwasser," Elton replied stiffly, "that I was responsible for your man Savinoff."

"But that is only one circumstance of several. Herr Zeitz, too, is missing—in a French prison. I sent him to report to the Imperial agent in Paris, Herr Gobert. Luckily Jukow remained in the background and saw that Zeitz was gobbled up by the French as he entered Gobert's flower shop. So—it is by the slimmest chance that I did not go myself to poor Gobert's."

"But why do you credit all that against me, Herr Staubenwasser?"

"One circumstance too many against you, my friend, is it not so? Didn't you learn Herr Gobert's rendezvous when you were last in Paris? Did I not give Savinoff instructions to keep you in sight? But—if I underestimated your shrewdness, I intend now to make amends. At least I claim credit for having been suspicious of you from the very first."

Elton gave an indifferent shrug.

"I presume," he said icily, "that if you have such suspicions, I might as well save my tongue."

"Exactly!" Staubenwasser affirmed, snapping his fingers. "Nothing you can say will do you the least good. But at least I will give you the benefit of one doubt—and let circumstances decide."

"Meaning?"

Staubenwasser leaned forward, his sneering smile expanding.

"Meaning this," he leered. "Only through you could the French police learn of Madame Cuignot's villa at Bagnolet. If my surmises are correct, your Deuxieme Bureau will draw their net at any moment. So—and they will find only two stupid French servants—while you, my friend, will then pay the penalty you arranged for us! Is that not fair enough, my good friend?"

"Fair enough, Herr Staubenwasser, except that if the French close in on Bagnolet it will be due to the stupidity of your agents and not my fault."

"Again you are mistaken, Señor Pozas. My agents have reported to me here since last night—and not at Bagnolet. Only Zastrov has been there—when he went for you."

The even smile that suffused Elton's face as he leaned back comfortably in his chair was genuine.

"In that event," he said, "Bagnolet will not be bothered by French police."

"In the meantime," Staubenwasser said sharply, "Rascha and Zastrov will sit guard over you and you will remain where you sit, without moving. My sixth Russian is on guard at Bagnolet and will report the arrival of the French. *Ja*, and what a pity if my surmises are correct, Señor Pozas!"

Staubenwasser leaned forward and his voice grew caustically bitter.

"To trap us in your net in Paris you will have destroyed your chance for magnificent duty—and lost your life to no good purpose! Tonight we leave for Amsterdam—nothing can stop us now. And there the Englishman Creechwood is waiting for us with news of Zumbusch. So! You may think of that and your own stupidity when the trap you have set for us closes on your own throat!"

Staubenwasser broke off with an imperative snap of his fingers and rose. His gesture snapped the tension of the others, who got up and filed from the room, leaving only Rascha and Zastrov, who sat close by on guard. Yola went out with Dittmar, without looking at Elton.

Even behind the stolid masks of the Okhrana agents Elton could read a vindictive vengeance, a thirst for revenge for the betrayal of Zeitz and the disappearance of Savinoff.

But he knew now that one danger only threatened him. A grim mischance of fate that would take the Deuxieme Bureau to Bagnolet in this critical minute. But such a chance did not disconcert him. Except for the development at Orlay, Rand's disclosure, he might now be securely held in just this trap that Staubenwasser laid for him. As matters really stood, if the Deuxieme Bureau had been adept enough to follow the elusive Zastrov, the trail would lead here and not to Bagnolet.

In the dining room he heard the popping of champagne corks. Staubenwasser and his henchmen were chattering over their wine. He caught fragments of their conversation. Staubenwasser was felicitating himself on his rare good fortune. The Englishman had Zumbusch treed. Not in Holland but in Brussels. All details would be ready for Staubenwasser when he reported to Creechwood at Amsterdam.

The name Creechwood intrigued Elton again with its memories of that mystery at Washington before the war, when the massive, heavy-jawed Englishman of that name had been enmeshed as the head of a counterfeiting ring. Elton's efforts had cleared Creechwood of the ridiculous charge, shown him to be the victim of a mysterious conspiracy whose purpose and leaders had never been cleared up.

Even at that time Elton had suspected Creechwood of being a secret agent of some foreign power, on some errand to America that had nothing to do with petty crime. The possibility that the man at Amsterdam might be the same Creechwood, now in the Imperial secret service, brought him some misapprehension with its danger of stripping him of his own masquerade. But he decided that such a coincidence must be remote. Even if the name was unusual, there must be many English Creechwoods in the world.

THE RASP of a buzzer in another room shattered his reflections. There was an instant silence in the villa. Rascha and Zastrov half started from their chairs. A moment later there was the roar of motors outside, a screeching of brakes.

Staubenwasser came into the room, white and drawn. He was giving orders to Rascha in Russian when there was a resonant pounding at the main entrance of the villa. Staubenwasser instantly composed his face.

"Some visitors," he said, and through taut lips warned Elton. "Please remember that your tongue can bring you most unpleasant consequences—no matter what happens! I alone will—entertain our visitors and you—"

Staubenwasser broke off under the insistent hammering at the door, picked up a book and sat down with a nod to Jukow, who had slipped on a butler's coat. The door opened a moment later. Heading the five gendarmes in uniform who entered Elton saw the familiar features of Lieutenant d'Auteuil, of the French Deuxieme Bureau.

"*Messieurs* and *madame*, please remain seated!" d'Auteuil announced peremptorily. "Your villa is wholly surrounded. I regret to inform you that you are held for examination at headquarters of the Deuxieme Bureau."

Staubenwasser stepped forward, closing his book with a snap, indignant amazement on his face.

"I am Monsieur Boisdeffre, in Paris from Geneva on business of my firm and with proper passports of my government," he said with polite firmness. "Since some unfortunate mistake must be responsible for this outrage, I demand that you examine my passports and the papers of my guests!"

"Credentials, *monsieur*, hardly will explain the presence at your villa of a suspected enemy agent my men followed here from the Imperial German rendezvous in Paris. And since I have my orders in the matter, you will prepare to leave with me at once!"

Elton rose with an ironical smile as he saw the French trap close irrevocably about Staubenwasser's lair. The day before this would have been a heaven-sent intervention, the way out of an inevitable and disagreeable duty of his own. Now the Deuxieme Bureau coup loomed as a menace to his whole new plan of operations. He knew that D'Auteuil would be adamant, bluntly insistent upon immediate delivery of these suspects to Colonel l'Ourcq. Elton was suddenly determined to save the unfortunate situation by whatever means offered. He took his credentials from his pocket and stepped forward.

"Please, *monsieur,*" he argued, "I am Señor Pozas, whose papers bear the visé of both France and England, and have been passed by your own Colonel l'Ourcq. I insist upon being heard—before you proceed with this unheard-of outrage."

Lieutenant d'Auteuil's easy *savoir faire* vanished into an astounding gaping at the apparition that loomed before him out of this suspected Prussian lair. Elton read the play of his mind. Amazement, followed by quick disgust. The American was ahead of him again, as he had been at Herr Gobert's flower shop, at the trapping of von Blauzwirn. D'Auteuil recovered his wits under the tangible something communicated to him by Elton's level eyes.

"I have heard of you, Señor Pozas," he said, his face resuming its mask. "But I have my orders, which are not to be disregarded on any account."

"Not even, *monsieur,*" Elton argued desperately, a covert insinuation in his eyes that d'Auteuil could not fail to read, "not even if you and your men, by interfering here, spoil the one great chance of trapping a certain Herr Zumbusch?"

D'Auteuil's eyes quickened at mention of the Austrian name.

"I will hear what it is you propose, *señor,*" he conceded.

"First, let me ask how many gendarmes you have with you?"

"There are twenty, *señor,* entirely surrounding the villa—and with grenades and machine guns."

"Excellent. That is force enough to surround the villa of Madame Cuignot at Bagnolet—which may be done immediately, if you wish to work with us, *monsieur!*"

"But—I do not entirely understand, *señor.* The details in a proposal of such importance?"

"Set your men in motion, then, *monsieur.* Have them completely surround the villa—closing in on it with the greatest care, on foot. You can follow them later—when the trap for Zumbusch is in better shape than at this moment. In the meantime, I will be able to tell you what it is necessary for you to know."

D'Auteuil's eyes narrowed quizzically. It was clearly difficult for him to abandon the determination that had brought him here in the wake of that shadow from Herr Gobert's, or to analyze the unexpected situation in which he found himself. But there was no minimizing Elton's judgment, his persuasive insistence that Zumbusch's trail was at stake. He argued briefly that the movement be initiated from headquarters, with the sanction of Colonel l'Ourcq, and finally yielded, remaining behind himself with a sergeant of gendarmes as he assembled the others and directed them to Bagnolet.

Elton did not minimize the serious consequences that might follow out of the necessity that now confronted him. There was but one conceivable way to dispose of d'Auteuil and his sergeant. But he argued that the end justified the

means. The Deuxieme Bureau, in its mistaken zeal, must be circumvented at all costs from closing the trail to Zumbusch.

As d'Auteuil's gendarmes disappeared in the distance, Elton gave Staubenwasser a significant glance. Rascha sauntered across the room and picked up a book. Staubenwasser ordered Zastrov and Jukow to bring champagne from the cellar. With an indescribable agility the three Russians hurled themselves upon d'Auteuil and his sergeant.

"What is this damnable outrage!" cried d'Auteuil. "I will—"

Rascha's lean hand closed over d'Auteuil's mouth. Dittmar brought sheets from a bedroom and tore them into strips, with which d'Auteuil and his sergeant were bound and gagged securely to their chairs.

Elton, cautioning Staubenwasser against needless injury to the pinioned Frenchmen, said nothing to D'Auteuil. He knew that only future developments might conceivably soften the official French tempest that would follow d'Auteuil's release.

"I think, Monsieur Boisdeffre," he addressed Staubenwasser in words meant also for d'Auteuil's ear, "that we must be leaving this place behind, if we hope to catch up with Herr Zumbusch!" He added with a brief smile, "I trust that you and your little court will not now hold it too strongly against me that the French gendarmes have closed in on Madame Cuignot's villa—as you were expecting them to do, *monsieur*."

CHAPTER XVII

Via Amsterdam

STAUBENWASSER left the room at once, a peremptory jerk of his thumb summoning the others to follow. In the dining room he gave instructions that, even in the crisis of d'Auteuil, his agile mind must have been planning.

"We leave Paris immediately," he said in a low, decisive voice. "By driving to the village of Priey, there is time to board the Paris-Le Havre express. That will put us in Le Havre at seven o'clock. Madame Cuignot will accompany us from here, but will then return to Paris. Be prepared in five minutes to leave the villa!"

Seven persons remaining of the Staubenwasser expedition, with their meager luggage, were jammed in the only available vehicle, the taxicab that had brought Elton from Bagnolet. At Staubenwasser's order they kept up a merry badinage and noisy laughter along the way, to leave with pedestrians the impression of a gay party from Paris on a lark in the country.

Since time did not permit dividing the party among several railway stations, all were compelled to descend upon the tiny station at Priey. Staubenwasser, simulating too much champagne, demanded tickets through to London. He kept up a tipsy argument with the station master until the train was in sight, then accepted tickets to Le Havre.

On the train, all were assigned to a single third-class compartment, much to Staubenwasser's disgust. The Prussian was visibly worried at this necessity, which placed all his eggs again in a single basket. He sat with tense face staring out the window, the others falling into his mood and saying nothing.

Staubenwasser's mission, the security of his agents, depended now wholly upon the chance that d'Auteuil's men remain at Bagnolet for several hours. The chance return of one of them to the villa would unleash the wrath of the Deuxieme Bureau. Wires in every direction would be sizzling with crisp messages. And d'Auteuil would quickly trace the expedition to Priey and the Paris-Le Havre express.

Elton was no less ill at ease than the others. Only the future could possibly vindicate, or in the slightest appease, the

outraged feelings of the Deuxieme Bureau in general and his friend d'Auteuil in particular. If caught now with Staubenwasser's Prussian cavalcade, he knew that his own headquarters would be forced to repudiate his actions. Explanations would be useless, so far as the French were concerned. They might even press the extravagant claim that he had gone over to the enemy, become that most despicable of creatures, the spy double.

How else was French logic to account for his conduct, his flagrant mistreatment of d'Auteuil in the face of the enemy? Elton knew that his own Section would not credit such a suspicion, but relations between French and American high command had never been anything more than superficially polite. And so Colonel Rand might be forced to drastic action despite his own convictions and inclinations.

When, at the end of two hours of travel, Staubenwasser showed no intentions of leaving the train, Elton's anxiety grew. He had expected the Prussian agent to initiate some maneuver to cover his trail against the dire possibility of d'Auteuil's release. By leaving the train, Staubenwasser could divide his party and stay under close cover until the chase cooled, or proceed to Le Havre singly and in pairs.

What was Staubenwasser's purpose in going to Le Havre, instead of shifting direction toward the Dutch or Belgian land frontiers? Even with the best of luck, Staubenwasser could not depend on d'Auteuil's imprisonment for more than a few hours. By eight or nine o'clock at latest the alarm would be spread, and Le Havre would be a hotbed of French police activity, with every dock, road and station under close surveillance.

But since he was helpless to affect the situation, he finally settled back in stoical acquiescence. His mission depended now too completely upon Staubenwasser to think of independent action, since only through the Prussian agent could he expect to locate the Englishman Creechwood and the hidden trail to Zumbusch.

Staubenwasser's tension relaxed as the train drew into Le Havre, the color returned to his face and his eyes beamed a sudden confidence. His mind had planned every move at reaching the French seaport and he gave clear, concise instructions that divided the group at leaving the compartment.

"French ink will now obligingly waft us to Amsterdam," Staubenwasser said with a cryptic smile as he got up to leave the compartment. "In a very few minutes, my friends, France will be only an amusing memory. Until then—*au revoir.*"

In accordance with Staubenwasser's instructions, the three remaining Okhrana agents, Rascha, Jukow and Zastrov, left next, separating quickly in the throng along the platform. Dittmar, Yola and Elton brought up the rear, crossing the platform together and getting a taxicab.

After three changes of vehicle they reached the waterfront, where two sailors in Dutch garb were in waiting. The two, after a brief exchange with Dittmar, led the way by a devious route to a small rowboat that put off at once into the black harbor and landed them under the sides of a small Dutch freighter.

They were little more than aboard than the engines were churning, the steamer heading around for the open sea. Elton was taken in tow immediately by one of the crew, who escorted him to a stateroom. He saw nothing of Staubenwasser nor the others and at midnight turned in. His destination needed no explanation.

He lolled back in his berth, now at ease for the first moment since leaving Paris. The Imperial secret service had planned well for Staubenwasser's departure from France. The Deuxieme Bureau

would burn up its wires and beat the bush of France to no purpose. Their quarry had disappeared in thin air. Nothing now remained between the party and neutral Amsterdam but a short stretch of open sea, controlled above the surface by the British Navy and underneath by the Imperial submarines, neither of which would molest the neutral flag of Holland.

The little freighter was moving along under full steam across a smooth sea when Elton came on deck at sunrise. Only a few members of the crew were about and, from their faces and manner, Elton judged them to be seafaring Hollanders rather than adventurers of the Imperial government. From one of them, who spoke French, he learned that the steamer was on the regular run between Holland and France. It had been held up for two days, for shipping instructions about the cargo. The cargo was mostly black ink, printer's ink consigned from Paris to Amsterdam.

The sailor's statement partly explained Staubenwasser's utterance of the evening before. But as Elton saw more of the crew, including several of the officers, he was puzzled by the availability of such a packet to Staubenwasser's purposes. Certainly there was no evidence of camouflage. The ship must be just what she appeared on the surface, a carrier of freight under a neutral flag, manned by honest Hollanders. How had Staubenwasser held it in the harbor? And that the German agent had known the cargo, printer's ink, hinted at some complication Elton could not fathom.

Yola appeared on board shortly, fresh and smiling, and joined Elton at the rail.

"I've never cared for the ocean," she said, looking about with an appreciative smile, "but it seems to me just now that the sea is the most beautiful thing I have ever seen."

"Evidently," he rejoined, "you did not appreciate Paris—which is really supposed to be a city of wonders."

"It was all very exciting," she said. "Rather too much so, for a short while yesterday. I really believe I'd rather choose some other route of returning to Berlin."

"Herr Staubenwasser, of course, is the route master," he reminded. "And a very good one, I decided last night as soon as we put out to sea from Le Havre."

Yola shrugged and made a wry face.

"I'm afraid if it hadn't been for you, Señor Pozas, which probably isn't your name, that our distinguished route master would have landed the lot of us in dear old Vincennes. Don't you think?"

"I'd hardly say that, Fraulein. Perhaps Herr Staubenwasser would have found a way out. But I'll confess a few very uncomfortable hours yesterday."

"Well, the French gobbled up those poor fellows Savinoff and Zeitz," she argued. "I'm just as well satisfied that there was someone with me besides Herr Staubenwasser when our French visitors called. Which reminds me, *señor*, that you are a very misleading and unreliable person—are we not agreed?"

"Of course—but just what do you mean?"

"You said my intuitions were not to be ignored. And yet was not my judgment of you better than my intuitions?"

"There may be, Fraulein," he replied drily, "circumstances of which you aren't aware. Therefore, I'll repeat—never disregard your own intuitions too far, even when your judgment tells you something else."

"Nevertheless, I must thank you for saving me from a volley of French bullets," she responded laughingly and added with a wry grimace, "But when it comes to Zumbusch and Babu I will have to depend on myself—and may not be so lucky."

Elton mused for a moment and turned to her inquiry.

"What about this Babu, Fraulein? She is nothing more than a name to me so far. Herr Staubenwasser said at Berlin

you are the only one who is a match for her."

"My only advantage is that I have seen the woman," Yola replied without hesitation. "It is possible I would recognize her in whatever disguise she affects. It is also possible that she will recognize me first—and in that event it would be unfortunate for me."

"An interesting situation. But is there anything further you can tell me about your—mission?"

"I see no reason why I shouldn't, *señor*. Where Babu is found, Zumbusch will not be very far away. Therefore if our Englishman fails us, I must go on the hunt. What the soldiers call a second line of action, isn't it? A long way to come for such a chance—but our secret service isn't taking any chances on Zumbusch. As for Babu—"

YOLA broke off at seeing Dittmar on the deck. The lieutenant, groomed to a polish, came up with an eager smile, nodded to Elton and took Yola in charge with the plea that he wanted her to see the ocean from the bridge. Staubenwasser arrived in a moment and leaned against the rail at Elton's side.

"You were magnificent in Paris, my friend," said Staubenwasser, a caustic undertone in his voice, a whimsical light in his eyes. "But please will you not now tell me frankly what became of my man Savinoff?"

"An odd question to ask me, Herr Staubenwasser," Elton replied. "Why do you assume that I can tell you about your Russian?"

"Naturally, *señor*, I'm appreciative of one thing—that my estimate of you was not incorrect in believing you a man of unusual intelligence and initiative. But we mustn't conclude I've lost any of my suspicion of you. I do want to make a point of it, however, that you made a serious mistake if you let the French police trap Savinoff. He was one of my most valuable men—and we'll both need him badly before long."

"If yesterday's events didn't satisfy your suspicions, then you'll always have them," Elton rejoined tartly.

Staubenwasser laughed unpleasantly.

"I rather object to being taken for a simpleton, Pozas. A man of your ability in the secret service must be a shrewd judge of human beings. Pardon my conceit in claiming the same faculty. My nerves weren't so jumpy or my eyes so shallow that I didn't read the situation between you and your friend Lieutenant d'Auteuil of the Deuxieme Bureau. The Frenchman all but spoke to you by name when he saw you. And your eyes tried to tell him you were sorry for what you had to do. I gathered that you would have taken him aside and talked to him—except you couldn't trust his judgment under the circumstances—knew he would want the whole matter settled at headquarters. Which would have been most unfortunate for me."

"You have a very vivid imagination, Herr Staubenwasser. But I thought your mysterious sixth Russian was keeping you posted on my movements in Paris?"

"So—you haven't forgotten my sixth Russian, eh?" Staubenwasser laughed heartily. "I thought that picture was gnawing at you from the minute we left Geneva. Well—unhappily I had other use for my sixth Russian that night and thought I could depend on Savinoff. My mistake. But I insist, Pozas, it is important for me to know whether the French have Savinoff. If they have—and should loosen his tongue—it might ruin everything we've done, and you're as much interested in preventing that as I am!"

"If it happens that the French arrested Savinoff," Elton argued coolly, "we are hardly in a position to control his tongue. I thought you said Savinoff was wholly dependable."

"Unless the French should offer him too much money—and his life, Pozas. These Russian mercenaries are not to be trusted too far when they fall into enemy

hands. As for your other argument, while we cannot control him, at least we can change our plans—if necessary."

"I will bear all that in mind, Herr Staubenwasser," Elton evaded.

Staubenwasser snapped his fingers.

"If you do not wish to be frank, Pozas, we will let it go at that! But you have already told me what I wish to know when you referred to Savinoff as 'was dependable' *Ja,* ünconsciously we reveal many things, my friend, no matter how skilful we are in guarding our tongues. Not only your unconscious use of the past tense but something in your enunciation of the phrase told me that Savinoff is—dead. Of course, I cannot be sure, but that is my judgment—and I think you will know the soundness of my reasoning."

Elton took refuge from the Prussian agent's sharp eyes in a quick smile.

"As I have said before, Herr Staubenwasser," he replied, "your mind seethes with suspicions. I'll not attempt to argue you out of your fancies."

"Excellent, Pozas! Then if you will remember that failing of mine—and bear in mind that my sixth Russian will not again be diverted to other tasks, perhaps we will have no further cause for misunderstanding in our operations together!"

Staubenwasser turned on his heel with this admonition and returned to his stateroom. Through the remainder of the voyage Elton was left to himself. During the day he saw, at different times, Staubenwasser's whole retinue out on deck. Rascha continued to play lone wolf, Jukow and Zastrov staying close together, Dittmar clinging to Yola about the decks and at meals, Staubenwasser chatting only with officers of the ship. The ship was docking at Amsterdam when Staubenwasser came to Elton's stateroom and closed the door with significant care.

"Let us understand each other, Pozas," the Prussian said in a low, direct voice. "Tomorrow—even tonight—may bring us to the trail of Zumbusch, if our Englishman has functioned properly. Please—it is a dangerous game we will have to play—whether in Amsterdam or whatever city Zumbush has established himself in. These Okhrana agents are the one great hope of destroying Zumbusch once we have the fellow treed. Therefore, it would be a calamity if another of them should be lost. May I depend upon you to hold no ill feeling against them because of anything that may have happened in France?"

"Even assuming your own suspicious attitude towards me," Elton replied, "we are all working in the same cause, slipping a halter on Zumbusch, Herr Staubenwasser. Of course, I rather take it you're not counting on me to protect your—sixth Russian."

Staubenwasser smiled mischievously.

"I have confidence that my sixth Russian will take care of himself," he said. "Particularly since he is acting directly under my own immediate instructions—and holds no power of life or death without my command."

"Thanks," Elton rejoined. "Then I'll know whom to blame if he botches the job of killing me—some day when you have one of your attacks of suspicion!"

"Let's hope nothing of the kind ever happens, my friend. That's one kind of job the Russian agent never botches!"

CHAPTER XVIII

Creechwood Interposes a Tip

IN LEAVING the dock at Amsterdam, Staubenwasser simplified the formation of his party, keeping only the Russians apart to follow in a second cab from the Central Spoorweg Station. The cabs threaded their way among the evening throngs in the curbless streets to an ancient house of high overhanging gables on Nieuwstraat. Here Staubenwasser went inside with all excepting his Russians, whom he left waiting in their cab.

The Englishman Creechwood kept himself intrenched behind an inquiring landlady and a meticulously inquisitive secretary, both Hollanders. And not even in the ill-fated Herr Gobert's flower shop in Paris had a more exacting ritual been necessary for identification. When Staubenwasser finally had satisfied the outer guard of the Creechwood intrenchment, all were taken to a gloomy library and seated. In a moment a massive, square-jawed man, slightly stooped, somewhat beyond middle age, a heavy pipe hung from his broad thick mouth, came and looked about laconically. Staubenwasser rose and presented himself.

"Delighted, my dear fellow," Creechwood exclaimed, extending his hand. "I was hardly expecting you before tomorrow—but you're all the more welcome for being ahead of time."

"The French were hospitable enough to want us to stay permanently," said Staubenwasser. "So, to save ourselves the embarrassment of their solicitous importunities, we came on to Amsterdam a few hours earlier than we had planned."

"It's really very fortunate, Herr Staubenwasser," said Creechwood, his eyes brightening. "By coming at this time, you may be able to embrace an unusual opportunity to get in touch with Zumbusch's crew immediately. Another day later—and there must have been a slight delay."

Elton was observing the two men closely, his pulse slowly subsiding from his first glimpse of the Englishman, which had confirmed his worst fears. It was the identical Creechwood of his ancient American adventure. There was no mistaking that broad, rugged face with its deep-set jaws, high cheeks, wide straight mouth and level gray eyes. The face was still set in that remarkable poise in which he had faced the charges of counterfeiting—charges involving five million dollars in British bonds. Creechwood's mind had seemed completely to dominate his body, control his emotions, mask his thoughts, in those critical hours. The intervening years seemed only to have given that poise a deeper intrenchment.

An Englishman securely masked in the German secret service. Elton caught a flash of light upon the possible play of international intrigue in those ancient charges against Creechwood. But he did not pursue the thought. His mind was busy now with the spectacle of Staubenwasser and Creechwood and with the crisis that must come with Creechwood's recognition of him as an American operative.

Would Creechwood remember him at once? If so, no matter how convincing his denials, would not Staubenwasser's ready suspicions be forever cemented? And once soundly convinced that Señor Pozas was a masquerading American agent would not Staubenwasser promptly pass instructions to his sixth Russian?

"Then we can really feel obligated to the French for their cooperation," said Staubenwasser. "What is the situation, Creechwood? I and my operatives are ready for Zumbusch—the sooner the better."

"Let me ask, Herr Staubenwasser, just what you propose. We are safe here against eavesdroppers—my men are on guard against listeners and I presume you can vouch for your own associates."

"In a phrase, our purpose is to destroy Zumbusch," Staubenwasser said incisively. "Once we have him located, we will plan the details of killing him."

Creechwood took several meditative puffs at his pipe.

"That isn't going to be so simple, Herr Staubenwasser. Zumbusch has got himself pretty deeply intrenched. I've routed at least forty of his agents in to him—and they're all fanatically loyal. I don'e believe your own Kaiser—whom Zumbusch proposes to kill shortly—is half so well protected."

"I have my three Okhrana agents, Creechwood." Staubenwasser's eyes nar-

rowed in an insinuating smile. "They are also his loyal followers—until one of them gets within reach of him with an injection of oubain."

"I understood you had six Okhrana agents," Creechwood said quickly.

"Yes. But two of them disappeared in Paris—swallowed up by the Deuxieme Bureau. Savinoff, I suspect, is dead. Zeitz is a prisoner. Luckily Zeitz is German and the French probably cannot loosen his tongue.

"That accounts for five, Herr Staubenwasser."

"You'll pardon me if I omit the sixth. But I have him along very privately for my own immediate uses, and therefore will not report him."

"And these—?"

Creechwood's eyes passed casually over the others, Dittmar, Fraulein Gobbin, Elton. The Englishman's eyes did not pause on Elton, nor was there the slightest hint of recognition.

"Each serves a particular purpose, Creechwood, in the job of killing Zumbusch and breaking up his nest!"

"But you have reserves coming from Germany if you need them, Herr Staubenwasser?"

"A thousand operatives will be brought if they are needed," Staubenwasser averred warmly. "All I need do is wire in code and a submarine fleet will put out from Kiel with reenforcements—to land wherever we may indicate on the Allied or neutral coast. But first, I wish to see what can be done, Creechwood." He debated for a moment and added, "To the sum my government is paying you for Zumbusch's death—I'd like to add fifty thousand marks out of my private fortune for the glory of trapping Zumbusch myself."

"A fair enough bargain, Herr Staubenwasser." Creechwood consulted his watch. "Well, then we'd better settle down to business. In just two hours the Dutch steamer *Sarphati* sails from the Zaandam for Calais. The information you will require, and arrangements for passage, can be disposed of nicely within that time."

Staubenwasser eyed the Englishman with acute amazement.

"Calais? You don't mean that Zumbusch has set himself up in any such place as that, Creechwood!"

"Are the German front lines in Belgium not back of Calais in the great region Bruges—Lille—Brussels—Antwerp—Ghent? A sector in which you have great masses of troops—and little fighting for them to do. Therefore, Zumbusch is centering his propaganda and intrigue in that region at present. Tons of his inflammatory pamphlets have gone through Calais from Amsterdam, camouflaged as newsprint consigned to northern Belgium."

Staubenwasser debated this briefly, disappointment in his face.

"Our intercepts fixed him at Amsterdam—or possibly Brussels," he argued, dubiously. "Are you certain you have him definitely pinned down at Calais."

Creechwood's wide mouth spread in a patient smile.

"I do not claim to have Zumbusch pinned to any one point, Herr Staubenwasser. I can see that you haven't yet grasped the whole picture. It's an army you're going after—a secret army holding a broad line and working on many fronts. Zumbusch may be in Calais at this moment or he may be at any one of his listening posts. How can I know that?"

"I had been led to suppose," Staubenwasser complained, "that you were close enough in his confidence to give us a better start."

"You're unreasonable, Herr Staubenwasser. Do you suppose Zumbusch would trust any man too far. He may have excellent reasons for treating with me at present—but he knows that a billion dollars would not be too big a price for his head, what with the Allies and Germans both after his carcass. I've given you his outpost—through which you can work your way under his guard.

What more could you ask? Besides, we are wasting indispensable time if you mean to move against him tonight!"

STAUBENWASSER accepted the situation. For half an hour they worked over the details of invading Calais. Creechwood was equipped with suitable credentials for Staubenwasser's whole party, Dutch credentials showing each to be the agent of an Amsterdam firm, Van Medemblik's, dealers in newsprint, dispatched to northern France and eastern Belgium for a survey of post-war trade possibilities. In these credentials, Dittmar resumed the name of d'Aix, Staubenwasser again became Boisdeffre, Elton remained Señor Pozas, the firm's agent from Mexico City, and Yola continued as Señora Pozas.

In addition to those credentials, Creechwood supplied Staubenwasser with bogus Portuguese identification cards. Calais, he explained, in addition to being filled with English, Belgian and French military forces and establishments, was the port of the Allied Portuguese Army. Since no one pretended to understand the Portuguese in France, and their military discipline was lax and ineffectual, those added credentials might prove handy in event of Allied interference. Staubenwasser was also furnished Portuguese credentials for his Okhrana agents.

When all details of the Calais expedition had been adjusted, Creechwood interposed a final warning.

"Calais, my friends," he addressed Staubenwasser, "is not a place for a woman so attractive as Señora Pozas. She would—"

"But Señora is perfectly able to look after herself," the Prussian interrupted, adding caustically, "Besides, if the trail you have given us of Zumbusch peters out, we will need her badly."

"That will not happen, Herr Staubenwasser," Creechwood assured. "But I must remind you that Calais is a hard port at present—where *señora* would attract far too much attention. It is better that you avoid drawing such attention to yourselves under the circumstances, is it not?"

Staubenwasser ignored the argument and gave his final instructions. Yola was to leave with him immediately. They would stop to instruct the awaiting Okhrana agents, then go direct to the steamer. Dittmar and Elton would follow in a few minutes. The boat was due to sail in fifty minutes, which allowed ample time for an unhurried getaway.

Creechwood escorted them to the door, then returned to the library where Elton and Dittmar were waiting upon their own turn to go.

"I wish to speak to each of you—separately and alone," Creechwood said at once, and indicated Dittmar as the first to follow him into another room.

Within a minute the two were back. Creechwood nodded to Elton.

"I have only this to advise, sir," he said when they were alone. "If you should run into trouble, stick to your Dutch credentials. Yes, no matter how dark it may look for you, do not hesitate. Do you understand?"

There was no slightest hint of recognition in Creechwood's eyes, no note of hidden import in his voice.

"But—I can imagine circumstances, sir," Elton argued, searching some hint of what Creechwood held in the back of his mind, "circumstances under which a Portuguese military identification card might be very valuable."

"Quite to the contrary, dear fellow," Creechwood affirmed. He added, after a moment's reflection, "I'm sure that if you will remember what I say, you'll understand what I meant one day. Pardon—but please that you do not compare notes with Herr Dittmar. I merely brought you here to urge you to kill Zumbusch at any cost, if you find him at Calais, and to wish you good luck."

Creechwood showed Elton and Dittmar to the door. A servant had called a cab, that took them back through the congested streets of Amsterdam to the Zaandam, where they boarded the *Sarphati* at once and went promptly to their staterooms as Staubenwasser had directed. The little craft put off on time. Amsterdam, Elton's objective through tense days of risk and adventure, suddenly became only a fleeting memory of myriad lights glistening in water, great elms reflected by somber canals, high gables against a smudgy skyline, dense, unhurried night crowds—and Creechwood.

Carefully, in his berth, Elton searched over the events at Creechwood's. The Englishman was a type, he thought, to conceal his innermost thoughts and feelings under almost any circumstances. But what German agent could escape some display of surprise or recognition at being unexpectedly confronted by an American secret service operative whom he had excellent cause to remember?

Creechwood must not have placed him. Elton decided that must be fairly certain. Otherwise the British traitor hardly would have trusted a known American agent with Staubenwasser's vital expedition as it returned to Allied soil. Leastwise not without requiring some explanation from Staubenwasser.

What was the purpose, then, behind the Englishman's warnings to him? It seemed devoid of any ulterior significance that Elton could fathom. If meant as a trap, certainly Creechwood had no such need of indirection with the power in his own immediate hands. He placed Creechwood now as one of those international adventurers whose purposes never come out into the open. Doubtless that ancient intrigue of the counterfeit British bonds would remain forever a mystery—except for the few who played in the strange game, whatever it was. A German agent, with Russian diplomatic ramifications. That estimate seemed to offer some light on whatever mischief Creechwood was playing with in the United States—and now.

Such a man might conceivably rid himself of larger loyalty and scruple. Even play for high stakes against his own country. The game itself was the thing with such adventurers. National ties were easily put aside when the stakes were large. Elton knew vaguely of such creatures. But they never came wholly to light. One month might find them in Constantinople, another in Berlin, a third in Washington. To such the world was their gaming table, nations the pawns. Statesmen played such a game, and diplomats; but always under the cloak of nationalism, clinging to the virtue of loyalty to country. Perhaps the Creechwoods, having a flair for international intrigue, had to play wherever they could find an acceptance for their talents.

And certainly no adventurer could have found a richer field for his talents than this. Zumbusch, for whose death a king's ransom was a paltry sum. The Englishman could demand his own reward from the Imperial government. Staubenwasser had offered a paltry 50,000 marks added personal reward for the right of way to glory. But wouldn't Creechwood be able to barter in terms of millions? That is, if he played his hand well and chose his own sweet time for the Zumbusch demise?

CHAPTER XIX

The Rat Hole at Calais

STAUBENWASSER laid his own plans for Calais and kept them to himself, giving Elton and Dittmar only such instructions as they needed in carrying out their own part of the scheme. They were to go to the Hotel du Sauvage on Rue Royale. Staubenwasser would be at De la Cloche near the Place d'Armees, while Yola was to await instructions at the Du Commerce, near Elton's hotel,

registered as Señora Pozas. Dittmar and Elton were to occupy one suite, which Dittmar would engage. Thus the party would be separated and within supporting distance in event of trouble, Elton to hold himself ready to appear at the Du Commerce as Señor Pozas if needed by Yola.

It was five o'clock in the afternoon when they docked at Calais. The first move into Zumbusch's lair was set for seven o'clock. That maneuver fell upon Elton and Dittmar, the latter in authority. An agent of Zumbusch, to whom Creechwood had directed them, was to be met in front of the Hotel de Ville at exactly seven o'clock. Dittmar was carefully coached in the ritual of identification.

"You mustn't appear quite so keyed up, d'Aix," Elton warned the German lieutenant as they set off from the Du Sauvage a few minutes before the appointed hour. "We've waited a long time and come a long way for this chance at big game—but your face mustn't advertise your enthusiasm to all Calais!"

"Thank you, *monsieur*," said Dittmar, slowly relaxing the muscles of his face.

The Boulevard des Allies, along which they swung to the Hotel de Ville, was filled by a motley throng. British, French, Belgian and Portuguese soldiers on their way to or from the front lines, or on duty about Calais, plodded the street, grim-faced, forlorn. There were a few sailors on the streets from British transports and French patrol ships, and a scattering of native fishermen, Flemish peasantry from the old town. Hence the place was a veritable babel of tongues.

Military police and patrols were everywhere to control the conduct of their nationals and keep down brawls between English, Portuguese, French and Belgian soldiers who seemed to go about with chips on their shoulders when behind the lines.

An ideal trysting place for secret agents, Elton thought. Also a logical point for one of Zumbusch's outposts, since the complexity of population offered his men a variety of masquerades. There were few women on the streets and those painted ones who brazenly plied their trade. Creechwood had been wise in warning that Yola might cause trouble in Calais.

The two timed their steps to arrive at the Hotel de Ville precisely at seven, stopping directly at the first of the bronze busts of the Duc de Guise in front of the façades. Instantly there came the first response, the jingle of a silver franc on stone. A small man in Portuguese uniform stepped over and began searching for the coin. In accordance with Creechwood's directions, Dittmar joined in the search, quickly found the franc and handed it to the soldier. The two exchanged a few words.

"Thank you, *monsieur*," the soldier said finally, drawing himself up to salute. "If you will come to the No. 17 of the Quartier Le Courgain at whatever hour you please, I will offer you the reward of some rare old wine."

"Thank you, my man, I will be glad to accept some evening soon," said Dittmar.

As the soldier turned on his heel, Dittmar led off past the Hotel de Ville. He lighted a cigarette; his hand shook visibly.

"That means we must be at Le Courgain in precisely sixteen minutes," he said, consulting his watch. "We must hurry along to be there on the dot."

In coming to the first point of meeting Elton had convinced himself that no one had shadowed their footsteps. Or if there had been shadows they were expert enough to keep their presence securely hidden. But as they headed into the twisting narrow streets of old Calais-Nord he was certain they were being followed. No. 17 was a ramshackle building of stone, scarred by centuries of use but untouched by the savage air attacks and submarine bombardments from

which Calais had suffered in months gone by.

The lower floor was a wine shop, the upper story apparently a boarding house for Flemish fishermen. The place was gloomily lighted when they entered, with a few glum customers seated about at tables sipping cognac.

Here Dittmar launched a new ritual with the beefy waiter who met them with a glowering stare. At a muttered summons from the waiter, a surly Walloon slouched forward from one of the tables, received blunt instructions in what must have been the Flemish dialect peculiar to Le Courgain, and motioned the two visitors to follow him. The way led through twisting black corridors, up a low flight of stone stairs to a large room fitted as sleeping room and office. Here a cadaverous man, whose crackling black eyes alone distinguished him from death, stepped forward in dubious welcome.

"You are from—?" he inquired.

"Amsterdam," said Dittmar. "We have done as we were told and wish to go ahead with our work at once, *monsieur*."

The tight-drawn skin across the bony face wrinkled in a grimace of friendly recognition.

"Very good, my friends," he exclaimed in a thin, rasping voice. He offered them a seat, poured brandy for three and sat down. "You have arrived at a most interesting time—and since there is work to be done tonight, I will not waste too much time on further formality. Please, may I examine your passports?"

He read the counterfeit documents Creechwood had supplied under a large reading glass, tracing the legend, scrolls and signatures with patient care. From this scrutiny he looked up with an expansive grin.

"Your identification is above question, my friends," he effused, rubbing his bony hands together approvingly. "Now we can speak together quite freely, and without circumlocution, *messieurs*. I am Monsieur Mougeot, whose name also is Sladek, servant of Herr Zumbusch. I ask if you are willing to serve to the death!"

Dittmar gulped slightly but covered with a lusty avowal.

"Death is nothing in such a cause, *monsieur!*"

"Then your duties begin instantly, my friends," said Mougeot. "Our good cause demands a risk tonight which only men not too well known in Calais can afford to take."

"Our orders," Dittmar equivocated, "direct that we report to Herr Zumbusch at Calais. We were not told of you, *monsieur*. You say you are merely the servant of Herr Zumbusch."

"All of us call ourselves his servants, my friend. But in Calais I am invested to speak for the master, and what I say is really the voice of Herr Zumbusch. Are you ready to accept?"

"Very well, what are the instructions?" Dittmar decided.

Mougeot drained his brandy and cupped his long chin in a bony hand.

"The General Jacques, commander of the Belgian Army, is coming tonight to Calais, my friends. Why does he come? To investigate, himself, a report that hundreds of strange balloons rise at night to be wafted into Belgium. Have we not let the word reach the Belgians that Herr Zumbusch for the present concerns himself only with destroying the Imperial masters of Germany? But that does not satisfy them. The French have demanded the death of our master—and the Belgian fools know no better than to help kill the goose who lays the golden eggs of peace. Therefore, do you not see what is our duty, my comrades?"

"But if Herr Zumbusch knows the danger," Dittmar argued, "isn't it easy for him to transfer to Amsterdam until—"

"Herr Zumbusch does not run away

from his duty, my friend!" Mougeot cut in. "In a cause as great as ours there can be no compromise! The General Jacques is a nobody, with whom we have no great quarrel. But General Jacques is threatening the course of tremendous events. Consequently the Belgian general must die, tonight. You, my comrades, will execute him at the Hotel Meurice!"

DITTMAR gulped again and stared impotently at Mougeot until he remembered to smile and appear at ease. He forced a smile and lighted a cigaret with an unsteady hand. An opportunity to kill an important Allied commander might have rested comfortably enough on his mind except for a risk that might complicate the whole mission that brought him from Switzerland. The situation clearly had Dittmar over his depth. Elton interposed promptly.

"If we hesitate, *monsieur,*" he said to Mougeot, "it's only because we've just reached Calais—and don't so much as know where the Meurice is located." He smiled persuasively. "You mustn't think we lack willingness to take chances—but you're asking raw recruits to jump right into the thick of battle."

"My men will give you full instructions," Mougeot snapped back. "The fact that your faces are unknown in Calais is the strongest—"

The shrill blast of whistles in the streets below froze Mougeot's tongue. He rose slowly to his feet, his eyes starting from their sockets. Downstairs there was a loud commotion followed by the crash of swift feet on the stairs. The door of Mougeot's room burst open violently. Five Belgian soldiers led by a lieutenant rushed in with drawn pistols.

"Disarm these men and secure them!" roared the officer. "Shoot the first that offers resistance!"

Mougeot was suddenly collected. He drew himself up and faced the officer coolly.

"This is my home," he said. "I demand to know the authority for this intrusion and the warrant for arresting me and my guests?"

"Conspiracy—spying!" sneered the Belgian. "What finer charges could we want for arresting three of your kind. And we'll have your whole lot before morning!"

"Conspiracy is a broad word, *monsieur,*" Mougeot retorted. "But you offer no specific charge."

"Conspiracy to murder the Belgian chief of staff, General Jacques, at the Hotel Meurice tonight!" bellowed the lieutenant.

"A preposterous charge, *monsieur,*" Mougeot protested. "But I am a Frenchman—and Calais is my native soil. Therefore you have no right to molest me on trumped up charges!"

"Belgium will act in this case—and act quickly," the lieutenant threatened. "As for your nativity, you are Sladek, a Hungarian, agent of Zumbusch! As for the evidence against you—" the Belgian pointed to the ceiling with a mocking guffaw— "we have listened over your own wires the past three days to everything you've said. So you and your assassins needn't waste any more breath on me!"

Mougeot surrendered with a shrug. The Belgians trussed their prisoners' hands behind their backs with leather straps and hustled the three downstairs into an ambulance. As the car jolted noisily over cobblestones, Dittmar leaned close to Elton's ear and whispered guardedly.

"I must leave it to you to handle these Belgians, *monsieur.*"

Elton made no reply. While he argued that his life could be in no danger from the Belgians, once he identified himself, his mission would be completely ruined if he should be compelled to throw off his masquerade. And since the

Americans were not represented at Calais, his case would be referred to the French for verification, an unthinkable complication at the present time.

The ambulance left the city for the open country. Half an hour of travel at high speed followed. From this, Elton judged that the Belgians must be set up well outside of Calais. He attempted to analyze the critical plight in which he found himself. Had he fallen with Dittmar into a trap? One laid by the Englishman at Amsterdam for some sinister purpose of his own? Or was it due wholly to some fateful coincidence that they had reported to Zumbusch's agent at the identical moment of a Belgian raid on Mougeot's rendezvous in Calais? Since he could find no answer to these questions he decided, in any event, to wait patiently upon the turn of developments.

The ambulance turned sharply to the left, careened on two wheels around a curve and jolted to an abrupt halt. The officer ordered them outside and marched them into a large building, apparently an old factory or storage plant. The entrance lay through a bare corridor in which the only object was a Belgian standard, furled in a corner. The three prisoners were hurried unceremoniously down into a dank basement and bolted in separate improvised cells.

Except that the hole was lighted by a bright incandescent set in the ceiling, Elton's cell was a ratnest. There was barely room to turn around and no furnishings. A pile of filthy straw was the only bed. Since he guessed that he might be left incommunicado for some time, he sat down on the floor and put his mind to an estimate of the situation, an analysis of certain inconsistencies that had caught his attention in the details of his adventure.

The Belgian lieutenant's uniform was uncouth and ill fitting. Elton had noted that fact at the moment of his arrest. Also the fellow was not of the Belgian officer type, although plainly a Belgian. This building, isolated and illy equipped, did not suggest even a minor Belgian headquarters.

But at the same time he remembered that war losses might explain such an officer and the congestion of the Calais area due to German seizure of Belgium's vital areas to the north and east might logically account for both inconsistencies. As for the light in his cell he assumed that this was for the purposes of indirect observation of his conduct in confinement, as in the case of that significant light in his cell at Berlin.

At the end of an hour his door was unbolted from outside and the Belgian lieutenant escorted him upstairs to a large room, dimly lighted and furnished with a dilapidated pine table and several benches. Three middle-aged men, gloomy and immobile as stone, sat at the table staring at him in the relentless humor of magistrates of the inquisition. One of them, porcine of feature, wore the Belgian uniform with the insignia of major, the other two were in civilian clothes. Elton was left standing in front of them for fully a minute before the silence was broken.

"This is the Belgian summary court of the district of Calais," the major announced with impressive solemnity. "You are charged with conspiracy to murder the Belgian chief of staff and with being an enemy spy." He extended a sheaf of typewritten sheets. "We do not need to hear the evidence against you, because our agents have set down word for word the record of your guilt. As a formality, you may examine it if you wish and say anything you want to say in your own behalf."

Elton took the transcript and scanned through it hurriedly. He saw that it included every word Mougeot had said at Le Courgain. For some time he held the document before his eyes while he shaped his course and framed his reply. Finally he passed it back and faced the major collectedly.

"An examination of my passports,"

he said coolly, "should convince you that as Señor Pablo Pozas, representing the Amsterdam firm of Van Medemblik, I have no possible motive for murdering General Jacques."

"We can judge your motives by your words, *monsieur*," said the major. "Is there anything further you have to say for yourself?"

"Nothing!" Elton flared, half defiantly. "If you have made up your minds, why waste words?"

The major blinked rapidly several times at this defiance but did not adjourn his court.

"If you are a commercial agent from so important a firm as Van Medemblik's," he prompted, in a somewhat milder voice, "there must be someone to vouch for you. I mean—Allied firms with whom you must have negotiated business."

"I know no one in France or Belgium," Elton shot back.

"Someone in England, then."

"Nor in England!"

The major's jaw snapped shut in decision. He lumbered to his feet and held a brief whispered conference with the other two.

"We will not waste time on you!" he blurted. "The sentence is death—the death of a rat, by hanging, which is what you deserve. The hour is set at the next sunrise—which occurs in four hours!"

CHAPTER XX

THE SPRINGS OF A TRAP

ELTON had little more than been bolted back in his rat hole than there was a shrill commotion outside his cell, the indignant protests of a woman against arrest.

"The French will demand satisfaction for this outrage, *messieurs!*" she threatened in a voice that was just short of a scream. "You are all fools, you Belgians, to dare such a thing as this! Haven't I told you that the Deuxieme Bureau will identify me at once? Have you lost your reason—to dare lock me in a cell!"

The bolts were drawn on Elton's door and the woman thrust into the cell with him. She clawed frantically at the door as it was closed on her and screamed a final warning.

"I demand that you bring the French commanding officer here instantly! Yes, for every hour I'm kept here—you'll be punished for this, you fools!"

The only response was retreating feet on the stone flagging outside. The woman turned to Elton. Her face was flushed, her eyes blazing outrage rather than fear.

"To think that these Belgian swine dare to treat a French agent like this!" she cried. "But they will pay for their insolent folly!"

"I'm sorry, *mademoiselle*," Elton said quietly, and added with a sympathetic smile, "*C'est le guerre.*"

"I was not speaking to you," she flared. "Keep your tongue to yourself!" She looked about the hole with a convulsive shudder. "What a filthy hole—the *foulest* I've ever seen!"

"Pardon, *mademoiselle*," said Elton. "But I only meant to reassure you. I hope the Belgians will promptly learn their mistake. I must admit this isn't a pleasant place for a lady."

The woman composed herself and her face relented somewhat.

"Thank you," she said. "I thought you might be one of Herr Zumbusch's Russians. But I see now that you must be English."

"American," Elton corrected. "At least—by birth I'm an American."

She looked at him earnestly.

"Then you, too, are a victim of Belgian madness?" she asked anxiously, and went on without waiting for his reply: "But the Belgians are all wrought up

tonight—and are arresting everyone they can lay their hands on. *Le diable!* But I was at Le Courgain on official business when they gobbled me up and would not hear what I had to say. It appears that there was a plot to assassinate their General Jacques—but that is no reason why they should lose their reason. I swear that they shall be compelled to offer satisfaction for the way they have treated me!"

"Your credentials should have saved you from such an outrage, *mademoiselle.* But perhaps some junior officer was too full of zeal. That often happens."

"Even that is no excuse, *monsieur.* I told the officer who arrested me that I am an agent of the Deuxieme Bureau." She laughed scornfully. "This means that my masquerade is ruined, since I have been working in Calais incognito —and once these Belgians know a thing, it's common property. But—I had no choice. You know, these stupid Belgian courts act so quickly that I might be before a firing squad if I attempted to save my identity."

"But of course they'll get in touch at once with your own officers after what you told them, *mademoiselle?*"

"They wouldn't dare do otherwise," she replied confidently. "And the minute the French learn that Mademoiselle Flaubert is here, the Belgians will be flush with their apologies."

Elton kept the conversation alive while he studied the woman with minute care. She wore the multicolored peasant dress of the Flemish fishing colony, her hair was carelessly arranged, her hands were not exactly clean and her face was smudged. But that did not detract from the fine pigment of her skin, the alert intelligence of her dark blue eyes and the fresh attractiveness of her face. A bowl of water, a few dashes of makeup and a Paris gown could work a swift miracle in Mademoiselle Flaubert, he guessed, one that would arrest attention even on the Champs Elysees.

"You, *monsieur?*" she asked presently. "Why have the Belgians brought you to this hole?"

"They found me, too, at Le Courgain, *mademoiselle.* They refuse to accept my passports as an agent of Van Medemblik's of Amsterdam. So—" he shrugged helplessness and gave a cynical smile —"I am sentenced to die in the morning, on charges which they have trumped up to their own fancy."

"*Bon Dieu!*" she cried in quick flood of sympathetic protest. "But the Belgians are out of their senses! *Oui,* they will not hesitate to murder everyone whom they suspect. Lately they are suspicious of everyone—and their courts are a grim joke. But—if you are innocent, perhaps I can help you, *monsieur.*"

"Thank you for your kindness, *mademoiselle,*" he replied, shaking his head resignedly. "But I'm afraid, from the way they've acted, there's no hope for me. However—what does it matter? Mustn't we all die one day, in any event?"

She caught his shoulder and shook him impulsively.

"You mustn't give up like that, *monsieur!* Please—I will be free of this hole at any moment—and perhaps the Deuxieme Bureau can help you. Will you not tell me—of any services the French can give? My people will not stand by and see these senseless Belgians kill an innocent neutral!"

In the play of Mademoiselle Flaubert's features, in the fire of her eyes, in the subtle hardening of the lines of her mouth as she pled with him, Elton read a warning. He looked at her with level eyes and smiled ironically.

"I'm afraid the Deuxieme Bureau would be no less skeptical than the Belgians, *mademoiselle.*"

"But is there not someone in France who can vouch for you—some consular agent of Holland to notify?"

"No one, *mademoiselle.*"

The drawing of bolts interrupted. A

Belgian officer framed himself in the door with an abject bow.

"*Mademoiselle,* we have made a most humiliating mistake for which I tender the apologies of the Belgians," he announced. "Please, will you come with me? You are released from arrest."

The woman ignored the Belgian and drew herself up stiffly in front of Elton.

"I am to assume then, *monsieur,*" she said coolly, "that your silence confirms your guilt."

Elton bowed without reply, Mademoiselle Flaubert left the cell without another word, the door clanging shut behind her. Out of his first glimpse of her Elton had felt the stir of intuitive warning. That had grown into open suspicion and finally into confirmation. The woman was Babu, agent of Zumbusch.

So that was the reason of the electric globe set in the ceiling of this cell? To give Babu her chance at him. The whole picture cleared. That uncouth Belgian lieutenant, this ramshackle stone house, the unconventional drumhead court in the room above, the strange coincidence of the raid at Le Courgain —those straws of circumstance now pointed the wind. He remembered what Creechwood had told him at Amsterdam, that he must not change his role no matter what happened. The Englishman's warning now was filled with significance. As Pozas he must see this thing through. Unless his own wits played him some dangerous prank he was the prisoner not of the Belgians but of the phantom Zumbusch.

He resumed his seat on the floor and lighted a cigarette. Luckily he had clung to his masquerade. Perhaps, since neither the court nor Babu had shaken him, Zumbusch's agents would accept him at last. He wondered what had become of Dittmar. Of Staubenwasser and Yola. Staubenwasser had been discreet in putting forward an advance guard to cover his advance. Once more the Prussian agent's ready suspicions and endless precautions had stood him in good stead.

Time passed endlessly without development. Since his captors had taken his wrist watch, Elton was left to estimate the hour. He tried sleeping, but the attenuated air in the suffocating hole set his head to throbbing too violently for sleep. What could be the purpose of keeping him penned up in this fashion? He set his mind to another scrutiny of the night's developments, going over every word, every play of feature, every incident. He found it difficult to think clearly. But he found, finally, confirmation of his first conclusions.

The clang of bolts jarred him from a doze into which he had fallen. He awakened with a start to a throbbing head. The Belgian lieutenant glared down at him, kicking him savagely with the toe of his boot.

"Get up, swine, and get ready for the rising of the sun!" the fellow barked.

Elton got to his feet and shook his head in the manner of a groggy boxer. The Belgian shoved him out into the corridor where three men in Belgian uniform closed about him and started him upstairs. As he reached the upper floor two men were coming inside the building carrying a stretcher. Upon it was sprawled a figure stark in death. Elton started at sight of the distorted features of young Dittmar. A mottled welt across the lieutenant's throat told the story of his end. Dittmar had just paid the penalty, death by hanging, of the court that had tried Elton.

As he approached the door leading into the courtyard, Elton was confronted by the porcine major of the summary court.

"Before you die, is there any confession you wish to make?" the fellow demanded bluntly.

"If I am to die it will be in a good cause," Elton said with a nonchalant bravado.

The major swore and gave muttered orders to his lieutenant. That officer stepped forward, drew a black hood over Elton's head, tied his hands behind him and resumed the march. The way led up a flight of wooden steps which Elton judged to be a scaffold. He felt a thick strand of rope about his neck, a heavy knot being tested against his ear.

His heart began pounding despite his efforts to compose himself, his knees grew weak and his head swam. Was it to be death in a moment, a brief struggle at the end of a rope and then eternity? Had his faculties tricked him into fatal misinterpretation of the situation about him?

"Have you a last word to say, *monsieur?*" the lieutenant asked gruffly.

Elton did not respond at once. His mind checked with an incalculable rapidity the events that had led him to this scaffold. Was it conceivable that this might be a Belgian reality instead of a Zumbusch trick?

But certainly a Belgian military force would act with some better regard for procedure. The woman—was she not Babu? Had she not come to trick him into disclosing his Allied identity? The death of Dittmar, did that no mean that the hapless Teuton had been misled into claiming Allied affiliations? These frequent interrogations? Why had Dittmar's body been exposed to his view as it was brought in from the courtyard?

Death lay lightly under his feet. Of that he held no doubt. If these were Belgian soldiers a word would save him. If these were Zumbusch's agents the same word would only spring the trap. What a chuckle for Zumbusch in that event.

"Come, have you anything to say!"

The lieutenant's snarl brought Elton face to face with his necessity. His decision crystallized. The muscles of his jaw tightened, he braced himself involuntarily as he staked his chances on the evidence of his wits. He shook his head in grim negation.

Through what seemed an eternity but must have been less than a minute he stood stoutly on quivering legs. A sharp tug across his head sent a chilling spasm shooting through his veins. Then the blackness under the heavy hood was dissolved by the gray light of dawn. The lieutenant had snatched the hood from over his head and was standing before him, yellow teeth bared in a grin. The man in major's uniform stepped up.

"Very good, comrade," he said in a low voice, a broad smile across his fat face. "Amsterdam made no mistake in sending you to us. I congratulate you upon your courage, my friend. If you will please come inside we will have some breakfast for you and discuss some matters of importance."

CHAPTER XXI

SHADOWS ON THE GANGPLANK

ELTON merely nodded. The reactions from standing blindfolded at the threshold of death left him weak and trembling. He blinked into the morning light and filled his lungs gratefully with crisp air. For the moment, under the stress of his tense adventure, these corporeal spectres who had welcomed him back into the world seemed strangely unreal. But he quickly gathered his wits and the strength of his legs.

His eyes verified the scaffold. It stood six feet above the ground, rigged for certain execution. He shuddered at the desperate gamble of wits in which his life had been the stake, then filled his lungs rapidly several times and followed the bogus Belgian major into the ramshackle building. The lieutenant and his henchmen dropped out of sight as the fat man took Elton into the chamber that had served as courtroom.

"I am known as Monsieur Gebiet," the fat man announced, motioning Elton to a bench and sitting down beside him. He indulged another smile and rubbed his beefy hands together. "Please that

you hold no hard feelings against the treatment given you, but in these days we must know what we are about when anyone is sent from Amsterdam or Switzerland to serve Herr Zumbusch. But you will understand this better when I tell you that the blond young man who was brought with you from Le Courgain confessed that he is an agent of the Allies!"

M. Gebiet interrupted himself by a fit of gloating guffaws.

"*Oui*, comrade, he even boasted that he came here to murder Herr Zumbusch. Since he thought he was speaking to Belgians, we let him make out the case against himself in his own way. Yes, but what must have been his thoughts when, as he said Zumbusch must die, he found himself kicking at the end of our master's rope. Isn't that a beautiful picture, comrade?"

Elton shrugged without sharing the other's mirth. A man in peasant's smock and wooden shoes came in with breakfast and laid it out on the table. Gebiet got up and invited Elton to eat.

"After you have eaten," said Gebiet, "there is work for you to commence in the service of Herr Zumbusch. I will return very soon with instructions, comrade, which I must prepare at once if you will excuse me."

Elton ate the meager breakfast of black bread, baked potato and skimmed milk without relish, lighted a cigaret and was lolling back to wait on Gebiet's return when he saw through the half-closed door of an adjoining room what appeared the hulky outlines of baled cotton. Accepting the risk of discovery he resolutely invaded the room and examined its stores. The bales were securely wrapped in heavy burlap and bore shipping signments from Amsterdam to Calais as "wood-pulp." His eyes searched out a broken bale which unmasked its true contents—stacks of printed leaflets and pamphlets in German.

A glance sufficed to unmask them as identical with the printed circulars found in the French wire entanglements and delivered to the Deuxieme Bureau. The unquestioned handicraft of Herr Zumbusch, and now eloquent of meaning. Sound of feet outside warned him and he turned from the room. Gebiet stood scowling at him in quickly aroused suspicion.

"It seems to me, *monsieur*," Elton spoke up with a disarming nonchalance, "that you are taking an unusual risk in that room. What would happen if some Allied patrol found your stores?"

Gebiet's suspicious scowl gave way to a hearty chuckle.

"But let the French come!" he exclaimed. "Or the English or Belgians, or Portuguese, or all of them! Our watchers will warn us of their coming—and we will leave them to enjoy some good reading. *Oui*, the touch of a button from the woods a thousand meters away and this place will detonate with the voice of Big Bertha!"

Gebiet dismissed the danger with a snap of his fingers.

"Now for your instructions, Comrade Pozas," he announced in a lowered voice. He handed Elton two small pellets the size of peas, one red, the other black. "You will return at once to Amsterdam by the vessel that brought you here, which sails at eleven o'clock this morning. There you will deliver to the person who sent you here the black pellet. The other you will carry on to Brussels and present it to the window of the second teller from the north at the Banque des Ducs de Brabant. But under no circumstances must you disclose at Amsterdam that you carry a pellet to Brussels."

Gebiet returned Elton's watch, money and passports.

"My instructions are clear, comrade?" he demanded.

"So far as they go—perfectly," said Elton.

"Then there is nothing further, except that you will carry these pellets in

your mouth until you leave Calais and swallow them if you meet with misfortune. As for the red one, Herr Pozas, it is of great importance to you. Bon voyage, comrade!"

Elton nodded acquiescence, lodged the pellets under his tongue and marched out of the building into the road to Calais. The hour was short of seven o'clock, which allowed him four hours to reach Calais and maneuver aboard the Dutch freighter *Sarphati.*

A few minutes walk in the crisp open air stripped away the last effects of the harrowing night. He felt a rising exhilaration to this tangible trail to Herr Zumbusch, even though that trail lay cloaked in mystery and littered with uncharted danger. At least he had passed the Zumbusch outpost. Without attempting, for the moment, to understand the purpose of his missions to Amsterdam and Brussels, he argued that it was another step toward the man of his mission—Zumbusch.

A farm wagon, traveling at a lazy trot, overtook him. He accepted the peasant's invitation to ride, suspecting that Gebiet had arranged the vehicle. If so, it was nothing more than a lift to Calais, since the driver asked no questions. At the outskirts of Calais the wagon turned into a sideroad. Elton walked on in to the Place d'Armees, and set out across the city, keeping to the main streets but avoiding his hotel.

With two sets of prying eyes doubtless behind him, he meant taking no unnecessary risks. Zumbusch's agents would watch his every move in Calais, he guessed. Doubtless the farm wagon had been arranged to deliver him into the city at a specified time for the convenience of the Zumbusch shadows. And the agents of Staubenwasser would not be slow in picking up his trail. Therefore he had two suspicious camps to circumvent, either of which could be counted upon to destroy him if suspicion became acute.

The mere fact that he walked openly through Calais should disarm Staubenwasser's suspicions, he argued; or at least temper the flood of suspicion that must grow out of Dittmar's failure to reappear. And he guessed that Staubenwasser would be very cautious in approaching him on the streets of Calais, even if the Prussian played such a risk.

From the Place d'Armees Elton turned south through the Rue Royale and walked as far as the Pont Richelieu, then returned past his hotel to pay his account, and set out for the Place de l'Europe, to board the *Sarphati.* Frequently he paused to look into shop windows in order to gain a close view of his flanks and rear. But if Staubenwasser's Okhrana agents or Zumbusch's shadows followed they managed to keep their presence covered.

He was passing back through the narrow Rue Royale when Fraulein Gobbin appeared suddenly ahead, coming directly down the street toward him.

Yola wore a jaunty hat and chic Swiss street dress that sharply accented the unusual spectacle of an attractive and unattached woman on the streets of Calais. Elton, noting the leering glances of passing soldiers and adventurers, wondered at her indiscretion. Whatever her mission she was in no hurry. But, though her face was coldly composed as if to indicate her contempt of the unwelcome attention she attracted, Elton caught a note of anxiety in her eyes.

Impulsively he decided to speak, pause long enough to pass a covert warning. He argued that if Zumbusch's men checked him on that incident he could pass it off with any one of a dozen ready explanations. Since, as she came abreast, her eyes were set straight ahead of her, Elton stepped in front and blocked the way.

"Pardon, *mademoiselle,*" he said, lifting his hat, "but did I not once meet you in Paris?"

Yola turned to him with flashing eyes

and with a sharp expletive gave him a stinging slap in the face.

Elton stepped aside in embarrassed confusion at the unexpected reception. There was a howl of derision from a group of passing soldiers. Elton accepted the lot of a rebuffed masher which Yola's action had forced on him. But in the next moment the little drama took on a new aspect as two Frenchmen blocked Yola's way with resolution, one of them gripping her firmly by the arm.

As Elton, after an instant's hesitation, strode up to the three, Yola turned towards him with a pointed finger.

"That man has been annoying me on your streets, *messieurs!*" she cried. "Is a woman not respected in Calais?"

The two Frenchmen, ignoring Elton, smiled thinly.

"*Mademoiselle* is clever," one of them jeered. "But just how clever we shall soon see at the Hotel de Ville. Please, *mademoiselle,* we trust you will come in arrest without commotion."

Yola stared at the two Frenchmen through a frightened moment, then accepted arrest with a shrug. Elton watched the three into the gawking crowd of the Rue Royale and reluctantly turned on his way. The hopelessness of intervention was only too apparent. Moreover Yola had made it plain that she did not wish his interference.

At the docks he kept an alert eye for Staubenwasser's Russians. His passports cleared him to the decks of the *Sarphati* without unreasonable questioning. Through the half hour that remained until sailing time he loitered about the main deck, seemingly interesting himself in the preparations for shoving off, but with a covert eye on the gangplank.

He had all but concluded that his way and Staubenwasser's had parted when, a few minutes before the gangplank was hauled in, Rascha sauntered aboard. Close behind came Zastrov. A moment later Staubenwasser himself, his face pale and harried despite his assumption of nonchalant ease, walked up the gangplank.

But Elton's eyes centered not upon the Prussian agent. His attention was caught by a stooped, heavily whiskered man in Staubenwasser's wake. The fellow wore the black hat and frock of a Lutheran missionary, but there was an intangible something about him that, to Elton's alert preceptions, hinted at the Okhrana.

Staubenwasser's sixth Russian. Elton watched the suspect to the decks with a fascinated stare as the suspicion fastened in his mind. Carefully he noted the fellow's gait, the set of his narrow shoulders, the tint of his ashen skin, the shape and set of such part of head and face as were not concealed by hat and hair.

On reaching the decks Staubenwasser asked immediately for his stateroom. The man in the Lutheran garb disappeared below at once, Zastrov and Rascha remaining on deck in sight of the gangplank. Elton smiled grimly to himself. The Prussian humor had been apparent. Staubenwasser had followed precipitately to the *Sarphati* after the arrest of Yola, the disappearance of the hapless Dittmar. Only Jukow had been left behind.

As the French docks swung slowly behind, Elton went to his stateroom. Staubenwasser would not be slow in asserting himself, he guessed. He removed from under his tongue the two cipher pellets Gebiet had given him, dropped the black one in his pocket, secreted the red pellet in his wallet and sat down, with a quiet smile on his face, to wait.

(TO BE CONTINUED)

"Give us that little fella with the white hat!" the big man yelled. "We want him!" echoed the crowd.

BARRY'S HAT

By DONALD BARR CHIDSEY

BARRY'S heels clicking on the sidewalk raised a multitude of scared echoes. The city was not absolutely deserted—from the direction of Union Square came a padded roar, and there was an even louder roar over on the East side; occasionally, too, he heard a shot, and once the crash of a volley. But these noises were far away. Immediately around him, except for the *click-click* of his own heels, was a tomblike silence.

From Central Park to the Battery no man was safe on this afternoon of Tuesday, July 14, 1863. The federal government had asked for volunteers, and not getting enough, the government had issued a demand. Draft wheels were to turn, names were to be picked. For a little while, for a few hours, all had gone quietly. Then somebody outside of one draft office threw a stone, breaking a window; and the crash had set New York City mad.

Men and shrieking women, leaderless, most of them recently arrived immigrants with no interest in or understanding of the war, went roaming in search of blood and plunder. They were wild, indiscriminate. In a foggy way they knew that they hated negroes because the negroes were the cause of it all, but in fact this was no more than an excuse, a starting point.

They hated everything. They were utterly mad, ranging here and there, beating and screaming and stealing, burning and killing. New York knew anarchy that day, chaos. The police and firemen, pitifully outnumbered, were

almost helpless. There were very few soldiers. The soldiers—so many of the able-bodied men!—were battling Johnny Rebs in Virginia, far away.

A man wasn't safe. Barry had known that when he sallied forth on a sight-seeing trip. He had met not a single human being in half an hour. Nothing stirred. Windows were closed, shades drawn, shutters were up. Two hundred feet from Broadway, he might have been in a city of the dead.

He'd seen plenty, and was satisfied. Soon, if all went well, he would be back in the safety of the Fifth Avenue Hotel in Madison Square, where he would spend an evening playing seven-card stud and marveling at the stupidity and viciousness of his fellow men.

If all went well. He was too good a gambler to be reckless near the end of a winning session. He walked slowly and with much dignity, but his eyes were busy, his ears alert; and when he heard a babble of shouts and screams from the direction of Broadway, he foresook sight-seeing to step discreetly into an alley.

He had two derringers, tiny weapons, but big-calibered, firing a huge ball. But these would be of little use against a mob.

The yells came nearer. A negro, crouching low, ran down the middle of the street, while rocks and brickbats flew around him, some of them raising spark-showers against the pavement. When he was opposite the alley in which Barry stood, a brickbat caught him squarely in the head and he pitched forward on his hands and knees. He remained in that position for a moment, shaking his head, moaning. Then he tried to rise. But by that time the mob had caught up with him.

There were about twenty men and almost as many women. They brandished knives, bottles, clubs, iron fence-pickets. Once the quarry was down, their shrieking subsided; and they were curiously silent as they gathered around the negro, hitting him everywhere with deliberate, measured ferocity. The negro moaned and tried to cover his head with his arms.

Now Barry had no special fondness for darkies: he was not interested in them one way or the other. Nor was he a truculent sort of man, or quick-tempered. Quite the contrary. Cold cynicism, perfectly controlled nerves, were parts of his stock-in-trade. He was no coward; but he was no fool, either.

Still, there is a limit to what a man can stand. The rioters had not seen Barry, and it was probable that after they had battered the negro into a mass of wet, lifeless flesh and splintered bone they would tramp away in search of others of his kind. It was certain that one person, even though he was armed, would have no chance of saving the wretch's life. All this was common sense—a commodity with which Barry supposed himself well stocked. But there is a limit to what a man can stand. Barry stepped out of the alleyway.

"Now what's the good of pounding that poor black fool? That won't keep you from being sent to Virginia, will it?"

They paused. The very audacity of the interference paralyzed them for a moment. Barry was a small man, neat, slick, with nothing in his hands; but his voice was round, clear, icy, and his gray eyes were hard.

Somebody cried:

"Sure, and if it wasn't for the dirty niggers we'd be having no war at all, would we?"

Somebody else cried, from the rear:

"Kill 'em! Kill 'em all!"

A woman, little and dark, her face glittering with sweat, grabbed hanks of her damp hair in both hands, and swayed, glaring at Barry. A man with a red face blubbered senselessly, looking at nothing in particular, while he swung a fence picket back and forth

in front of his legs. There were two very old men in the center of the half-circle. Their eyes were bright with indignation. Maniacs, all of them. Not men and women at all, really. Maniacs.

Somebody shrilled:

"Where'd you get that hat, mister?"

Barry despised crowds; but this was a life or death matter. He took off his hat, beaming proudly at it. It was a high, bell-crowned, broad-brimmed plug made of white beaver in the rough—the sort of hat only a man of great daring could wear—and its effect was magnificent, its cockiness irresistible.

"That's a grand tile, my friends." He replaced it, tilting it at a rakish angle. "A grand tile. Now I propose we go somewhere and find a grog shop that's open, and we'll all have a drink to this hat, eh? I'm buying, gentlemen. And that goes for the ladies, too."

He hated himself for it. And he was the more disgusted when it became evident that the strategy was wasted.

"If we can find a grog shop, mister, there ain't nobody's going to have to *buy*. We'll *take* the stuff!"

"An' what's more, if you got money enough to talk about paying for drinks, mister, I guess we'll take that, too!"

"An' them diamonds! Lookit them diamonds!"

A huge "bhoy" pushed his way to the center of the group. His red beard was spotted with saliva; his eyes, too, were red, blood-shot; and he smelled of bad whisky. He wore slate-colored trousers, blotched with blood like the face of a person hideously diseased, and his blue shirt hung in shreds.

"Ain't that nigger dead yet?"

Enormous fists gripped a three-foot length of lead pipe which rested upon his left shoulder.

"Here, I'll fix him!"

It happened before Barry could do anything to prevent it. The blow made a wet squonching sound.

The bhoy raised his club again, turned upon Barry.

"You! I saw you coming out o' the *Tribune* office last week!"

The crowd stirred, and weapons were shifted. Somehow, like so many of the other beasts who had the city in their grip that day, they thought that Horace Greeley's paper too was responsible for the draft. In fact, Barry had never been near the *Tribune,* but he knew that denial would be a waste of breath now. He put his right hand into a pocket.

"I saw you! I saw you meself!"

The bhoy started to swing his club. Barry, without otherwise moving, drew a derringer and shot the man in the belly. The bullet must have struck the spine. The bhoy swayed, astonished eyes wide open, mouth open, too. Then suddenly but quietly he sat down. Again he swayed for a moment, gaping like a man who sees ghosts; and finally he toppled sideways without a sound.

The explosion had been followed by a silence almost deafening, while smoke drifted carelessly away. Barry was the first to recover himself. He turned and ran.

He was small, and very fast. He ran east—not from choice, but because it was the only direction open to him. A stone hit him in the left shoulder blade, but he didn't pause. He didn't make the mistake the negro had made. He did not crouch too far forward as he ran.

There was nobody in sight on Fourth Avenue, up or down. He would have turned north at this crossing, but he thought he heard shouts in that direction and feared he might encounter another mob. That would be fatal. They were not asking questions today. They were killing blindly.

South would never do. Union Square was a maelstrom of undirected violence, he'd heard.

So he continued west. No door was opened for him. Nowhere was there anything to suggest that a house was occupied. Stumbling, gasping a little in spite of himself, he burst into Gramercy

Park. More rows of doors closed and locked, windows closed and locked and shaded.

A stone whizzed close to his right ear, another hit him in the right leg. He could hear the mob close behind him.

On the north side of the square a door was flung open. A tall man in military uniform appeared. There was a revolver in his hand.

BARRY vaulted the iron picket-fence, raced through the garden, up the steps, into the house. The soldier raised his pistol and fired once over the heads of the crowd. The crowd stopped, astounded. Then it began to push forward again. The soldier fired a second shot, low. A man dropped, and there were screams of pain. The crowd retreated.

"Thank you," Barry said.

The soldier turned. He was an officer, young, tall, big, very handsome.

"Are you injured, sir?"

"My dignity's ruffled and I'm out of breath, but that's about all."

"Shall we step inside?"

The hallway was spacious, sedate Sheraton furniture, large dark portraits on the walls, a circular mirror in a mahogany frame, a gracefully sweeping, red-carpeted staircase.

The young man bowed and extended his hand. "I am Captain Harrison Colfax of the Seventeenth New York, sir. I trust I have been of some service to you?"

"Well, you saved my life."

They shook hands briefly, but with considerable warmth. His host amused Barry. He had all the seriousness of youth: he was perhaps twenty-three or twenty-four, at least fifteen years younger than Barry, yet Barry felt and looked like an insolent stripling beside him.

"Mr. Lawrence Barry, captain, at your service, and deeply grateful."

If Captain Colfax caught anything of mockery in the small man's manner, he did not show it.

"I am pleased to have been of service, sir."

"You are—shall I say a gentleman, captain? That is, in peace times?"

"You might call me that." Even his smile was grave, as though he considered it his duty to smile in just that fashion. "And you, sir?"

"A card-player by profession, captain, in war and peace alike. Not a person you'd pick to entertain under ordinary circumstances."

Sheer mischievousness had inspired the remark, and mischievously Barry watched its effect. The captain was flustered, but firmly polite.

"I am sure that your company would always be agreeable, Mr. Barry, and I only regret that I'm not able to offer you decent hospitality."

"Decent hospitality right now just means something to get behind."

The captain bolted the heavy door.

"Shall we go into the parlor?"

"Do you think it would be safe? Sounds as though they were heaving rocks in there."

"Probably they are. They were an hour ago, and the place is wrecked. Still, we can keep watch on them there and see that they don't rush the house. And I'm sure," he added, "that we'll find something to get behind, even there."

For a bad instant Barry wondered whether the captain was mocking *him*.

The host opened big double doors. The parlor discovered was a mass of wreckage. Every bit of glass had been knocked from the frames of the French windows and lay scattered in small pieces upon the floor. The furniture was chipped and broken. Pictures on the walls were ajar in attitudes of bewilderment. A once impressive chandelier, almost prismless now, looked bedraggled, dumbfounded, ludicrous, like a cock with its feathers plucked. The mirror which overhung the marble mantlepiece was a great white star of smashed crystal.

Strewn everywhere were sticks, paving stones, brickbats, fence-pickets, rocks, chunks of dried mud. It had been a lovely room; and somehow even now it managed to maintain an air of serene, assured gentility.

"You've had visitors before this, captain?"

"There was a mob about half an hour ago. They were pursuing a pair of negroes, women both of them, and I offered them refuge. The negroes I mean, of course."

"Of course."

"I didn't want them, I can tell you! The only other persons in this house are my fiancée, Miss Sarah Jane Abbey, and her mother, Mrs. Alice Fortesque Abbey." He pronounced the names with solemn thoroughness, somewhat pompously. "It is their home. I was merely visiting, on leave, when the trouble started. But of course I must remain and offer them my protection."

"Good way to do it—put up the first niggers that come along."

"I couldn't stand by and see them slaughtered! We've got to do what we can for females, sir, whether they happened to be white or black."

They were kneeling behind an overturned table, and peering over the top of this from time to time like soldiers in a trench. Now and then a stone crashed harmlessly against the back wall, but mostly the mob was quiet, shifting back and forth, swaying threateningly, but getting no closer; but neither did the mob show the slightest inclination to depart.

Barry asked:

"They try to get in, did they?"

"I held them off with my pistol. They stood around very much as these people are doing now, and eventually they went away. I thought they were coming back, just now. That was why I went to the door."

"Maybe this is the same crowd?"

"I don't think so. It's bigger, for one thing. And I don't seem to recognize any of these people."

They were silent for some time, the captain watching the mob, Barry stealing timid glances at the pictures on the walls and the articles on the mantlepiece. The mob got no closer, except for one black-haired giant who climbed the fence and stalked back and forth in the front yard.

"Give us that little fella with the white hat," this giant yelled again and again. "We want him!" And the crowd echoed the demand: "Give us that little fella in the white hat!"

Barry stroked his hat lovingly. He had taken it off because it brought a shower of rocks whenever he thrust it above the barrier.

"Why do they want your blood so very much, if I may ask, sir?"

Barry shrugged.

"I don't know. . . ." He wouldn't admit to this bendless aristocrat that he too had been foolish enough to try to protect a negro. "Just looking for somebody who was alone, I suppose."

"You are armed?"

"Two derringers. But one's fired and I haven't any powder and ball for it." He nodded toward the man in the front yard. "Speaking of pistols, don't you think we're permitting that skunk to get in too close? What about putting a hole in one of his legs?"

"I have only two cartridges left."

Barry made a little "o" with his mouth, but he didn't whistle.

"No other weapons in the house?"

"Only my sword."

"And nobody else but us and the four females?"

"That's all. The servants skipped last night, and as far as I know, none of the other houses in this block are occupied now."

Again Barry made an "o," nodding thoughtfully. Three shots and a sword —so that's the way it was? A single rush would finish them.

"Some soldiers marched up Third Avenue this morning, but I haven't seen a policeman all day."

"I don't reckon you're likely to, either."

The captain appeared to think it his duty to keep up conversation.

"I asked why they were pursuing you because I thought it possible you might be an official in charge of the draft or something."

"Me?" Barry laughed. "I'll have nothing to do with their damned draft, except it's to plank down my three hundred dollars for an exemption if they should happen to draw my name out of the wheel."

The captain gasped. He was like a man who meets creatures of whom he has heard but in whose existence he never really has believed.

"Have you no desire to save the Union, Mr. Barry? I don't wish to seem offensive, but have you no desire to make a stand for liberty and—and all the finer things for which our government stands?"

Barry glanced sidewise at him, marveling.

"The Union and liberty and all the rest of it be damned," he said. "I'll not go out and starve, and tramp around in mud and horse droppings, and obey some fat political appointee, just for the sake of a lot of smelly niggers I've never even seen."

"You don't object to the danger, then, just the inconvenience?"

"Oh, I wouldn't mind the danger! I'll fight, any time. That is, I'll fight if I have to. But I'll do it on my own terms. No man's going to tell me I have to get into just such a suit, with just so many buttons in this-and-that position, and hold a gun exactly so-and-so, and walk precisely the same way everybody else is walking. No man's going to come to me and say, 'Here's what you fight with, and here's the way you do it, and there's the men you fight, and I'll tell you when to start and when to stop.' Ugh!" Barry gave an honest shiver. "I don't see how men endure it."

"Men do, though. They do because it's their duty to."

"Umph," said Barry, the gambler.

THE crowd was getting closer, a growling, swaying mass of angry faces. Some were as near as the picket-fence, which was low. The black-haired giant still strode up and down the garden, bellowing that if the little fella didn't come out pretty soon he'd go in there himself and break the bastard's neck with his own two hands.

Beyond, shadows were clustering in furtive conference among the trees and shrubbery of Gramercy Park. The shadows were getting longer, the sky darker. There had been no sun; night would come early.

"Marching back and forth, just this way, just that way! Not even allowed to breathe unless you do it according to military regulations!"

"They'll rush us when it gets dark," Captain Colfax said.

Barry shrugged.

"Well, if you will go harboring niggers—"

"These people outside," Captain Colfax reminded him, "are not after the negroes."

"Meaning," the gambler said slowly, "that maybe I'd better go?"

"I said nothing of the sort, Mr. Barry. You misunderstood me! I assure you I wouldn't think of letting you go."

"If I wanted to go I'd go, and you wouldn't stop me!" Barry checked himself, frowning; for this was boy's talk. "I know you don't like me, Colfax. Didn't from the start."

"That"—with quiet severity—"has nothing to do with it."

"Umph," said Barry. He felt awkward, annoyed. He decided to change the subject, and with a mental wrench he forced himself to ask about the back of the house.

"That's safe. So are the sides, which touch the houses on either side. In back the windows are small and barred, and the door's so heavy it would require a battering ram to smash it in."

"Our only danger, then, is these windows?"

"That's all." The captain was calm, quiet. There was nothing in his voice to indicate that any unpleasantness had occurred. When he heard a timid knock on the hall door, and that door opened hesitantly, he excused himself with impeccable politeness. "I think that's Miss Abbey with the tea," he said. "Would you care for some?"

Even Lawrence Barry gasped then. But he shook his head, glowering out toward the crowd.

"I don't drink tea," he muttered.

Tea!

He heard the captain quit the shelter of the table and hasten into the hallway. He heard him talk to his fiancée, and heard her answer him. She asked him who the stranger was, and he explained with rigid exactness, only omitting mention of Barry's profession. She asked if the gentleman would care to have some tea, and Colfax said no. Then, while he drank, she told him that her mother was bearing up well and was busy trying to quiet the negro women, who were both hysterical. Her own voice was calm and slow, rather high but musically high.

Barry wished to steal a look, but he kept his gaze determinedly upon the windows and the street outside. Over and over again he said to himself: "He won't introduce me to her! He wouldn't introduce a man like me to a woman like her!" And sometimes, almost childishly: "The hell with both of them!" He held the loaded derringer in his right hand.

It startled him, and frightened him a trifle, when he heard Colfax call in a low voice:

"Mr. Barry, would you care to come out here for a moment and meet Miss Abbey? I don't dare ask her to go into that room."

Barry was about to refuse. He was furious. But curiosity, never one of his faults at a poker table, had him prisoner now. He pocketed the derringer, donned his hat, rose. Promptly there were yells from outside, and stones began to fly. Barry lost his temper. Wildly, muttering hot things, he snatched up some stones and threw them back through one of the windows. The crowd laughed derisively, and Barry sprang back to the safety of the hall, feeling very foolish, shamefaced.

Sarah Jane Abbey was a dim figure in that dim place, but Barry had a conviction that she would have been lovely even in strong sunlight. She was slim and small, exquisite, garbed in something fleecily white. She wore no jewelry. He saw that she had large eyes, probably dark gray like his own, and tiny, even teeth, a clear complexion, light brown hair. He bowed very low before her, holding the beaver over his heart. He told himself that she was a woman any man might bow before—it was not a question of blood or breeding. He wouldn't bow like that before Captain Colfax! It was a different matter, a beautiful woman.

She was a shimmer of whiteness among the long cool shadows, yet for all her careful voice he could sense the fright that shook her. This was a lady! Somewhere back in the darkness behind the stairway was a blurred whimpering, a low unhurried murmur as Mrs. Alice Fortesque Abbey tried to soothe the negresses. It seemed as though a shriek might at any instant violate the gentility of the house. But the girl with the teacup was tranquil. When his eyes grew accustomed to the gloom, Barry could see that her lips were without color, her neck muscles were tight. But pauselessly she was his hostess.

They talked in formal periods. He

remembered little of what they said, nothing important. He drew a fawn-colored silk handkerchief from the breast pocket of his coat, and ran it between his fingers, rubbed his hands with it. For he was perspiring a bit. The palms of his hands, in particular, were very wet.

"I'd better get back inside," he blurted. "Must watch that big fellow." He bowed again. "It has been a profound pleasure, Miss Abbey."

He turned, stuffing the handkerchief into his breast pocket, and with his left hand putting on his hat. So it was that he had no chance to reach for the derringer. A knife gleamed within six inches of his face before he could realize what had happened.

"Don't move!" Now the black-haired giant was grinning, gloating. "Either of you reach for a gun and this fella will lose his gizzards."

Barry said coldly: "Before that could happen you'd lose one of your eyes."

"Huh?"

The giant gaped, confused, a little frightened. Barry stared contemptuously at him, stared past the knife as if it weren't there. His nervousness was gone now, and he was icy, utterly sure of himself, for he was not faced by a lovely woman but by a man who threatened and blustered—and he was used to such men.

"Do you think I'd use a good ball on a lout like you? See my right hand, eh? It's got the corner of a handkerchief, hasn't it? A silk handkerchief? Yes. Well, in the opposite corner of that handkerchief there's a slug of lead sewn into the seam. Maybe you don't know what that means? If you don't, I'll tell you. With this handkerchief I can snick either of your eyes out before you could possibly bring that knife down. I might even get both of them. I've done it before."

The giant was motionless, a statue. But fear swam swiftly into his eyes, and his lips began to tremble. The knife was not steady.

"Want to see me do it?" Barry tugged very gently at the handkerchief. "It'll be the last thing you ever do see," he promised.

Little and tough and bitter he was, and his eyes were indescribably cold. The giant wavered, gasping. Then he jerked his head back, threw his left hand over his eyes.

Barry stepped back quickly. Captain Colfax drew his revolver.

"Drop that knife and get out of this house!"

They heard him sobbing with panic, heard him stumble across the parlor. Barry bowed again before the girl in white. "I've been lax," he said apologetically. "I must get back to my post. Forgive me."

She was silent for a moment; and though she did not move, the gambler could sense her shrinking. "It—it was very quick-witted of you," she said at last.

"A trick of the trade, miss. As Captain Colfax here will tell you, I'm a professional card player, and we have to be ready for anything."

He went back to the overturned table. The shadows in Gramercy Park were longer now, deeper. The crowd was edging close, though the black-haired giant was not in sight. A clock on the mantle, which somehow had escaped all missiles, ticked with sturdy persistence.

After a time, Captain Colfax returned.

"They're screwing up their courage for the rush," Barry told him.

"Can you really snap a man's eye out with a silk handkerchief?"

Barry grunted.

"Can if you know how."

He did not tell that *he* didn't know how, that there was no lead sewn into his handkerchief anyway. It would sound like bravado to explain that; and bravado would be out of place here. Besides, it's always well to keep a man guessing.

Barry had known men like Harrison Colfax, though he never had talked with

one on the man's own ground. But he hadn't even believed in the existence of ladies like Sarah Jane Abbey. He was awed, for all his cockiness.

ABOVE the trees of the park the sky was a bloated, swollen red, a sick red seen through a film of black smoke. More buildings were ablaze downtown. There was a sound of irregular firing from that direction, too, and occasionally the boom of a cannon. Night was definitely on the way, sneaking into the city as though uncertain of the welcome it would receive.

Outside the Abbey home a woman harangued the crowd. At every tenth word she was applauded by a shout from the massed throats of the rioters. They'd been idle too long. They'd wasted too much time at this place. Still they yelled for the little fella in the white hat.

Barry glanced at his companion. He scarcely could see Colfax now.

"I'd been hoping the police might come before it got dark. Or else that these people would get tired and go away."

"I'm afraid we're in for it," the captain said quietly.

Barry cleared his throat. "I—I don't like you, Colfax, and I don't guess I ever would. But I'm damned if I'm going to sit here and let you get beaten to a jelly just because of me. Sheltering niggers is one thing, but sheltering a man like me is something else again. At least, I reckon that's what your girl back there is thinking right now."

"If I supposed for an instant—"

"So you can be a martyr over those niggers all you want, but no man's going to be a martyr over me!"

"I'm sorry you take that attitude, Mr. Barry. I assure you that—"

"Never mind assuring me anything!" Barry put his hat on carefully. "I haven't got time to listen. Because they're just about ready to let go out there. Well—if they really want me, they're going to get me."

"See here! You aren't going out?"

"I am. I have a stud game on tonight, and I mustn't keep the gentlemen waiting. Goodby! And thanks for the hospitality."

"See here! I won't allow you to—Stop, man! Come back here!"

Sarah Jane Abbey, who had been loitering in the hallway, heard the shout, ran into the parlor. She found Harrison Colfax at a window, waving his revolver, while the little gambler strode across the garden directly toward the sidewalk.

"Oh, stop him! Can't you stop him?"

"He won't stop! The man's mad!"

They saw Barry reach the fence, draw his derringer. The crowd fell back, churning, muttering low.

They saw Barry, feet together, toes pointed, vault the fence. They saw him pause, surveying the mob with cool insolence, sneering. Then a woman screamed, the mob's voice rose to a sudden roar. Somebody swung a sandbag. The blow caught Barry's shoulder and whirled him twice. He threw himself into the very midst of them. The derringer exploded.

For a moment, standing in the window, they couldn't see Barry at all. But the surging, the lifted clubs, the tossing heads, showed where he was fighting.

Then they saw him break through running. The whole crowd after him. A man lay bleeding on the sidewalk. The crowd raced toward Broadway, shrieking, throwing rocks. They left a litter of split sticks, splotches of spittle, broken bottles, stones, chunks of mud; and the little gambler's hat, miraculously uncrushed, performed a wide and lazy circle—and came to rest.

Sarah Jane Abbey whispered: "Oh, I hope he gets away! I hope he gets away! I hope he gets away!"

"What a cavalry officer that man would have made," said Harrison Colfax of the Seventeenth New York.

UPS-A-DAISY!

Knowing for sure the balloon was overloaded he tried to row it back to land.

By ANDREW A. CAFFREY

THE Channel packet, sailing out of Calais for Dover on that bright August day, had a first-magnitude passenger aboard. He was the newly-arisen aeronaut, Monsieur Jean Pierre Blanchard of France. Monsieur Blanchard, super-showman and a great little *garçon* when and where a bit of first-person telling might help the cause, was quitting France more or less in a huff.

France had not done the right thing by Blanchard. France, even now, in the Summer of 1784, was still giving too much attention to her first man of the air, that great Pilatre de Rozier, who had made the first ascent of man hardly nine months before. Blanchard didn't like that. There should be glory enough for many. Or, at least, enough glory and public acclaim for two—for Pilatre de Rozier and also for Jean Pierre Blanchard. For the science of human flight was yet in its first year.

On the packet's deck, with a ring of eager listeners giving ear to each word that was spoken, the small Jean Pierre was telling about it. The small one had an idea, a monstrous, overwhelming storm of the brain. He was going to England for the purpose of promotion. The promotion of money; and that, of course, is no new idea for a Frenchman. But with the money, Jean Pierre Blanchard, he who stood and spoke right there before them, was going to sail a balloon eastward over, and across, the Channel. It would end its trip in France.

The man was crazy! But all aeronauts, even the great Pilatre de Rozier, must be a little bit touched.

"Yes, my friends," Blanchard told

them. "All France shall see the great Blanchard balloon, like a mighty globe in the sky, sail high across this English channel. So high, my friends, that the sight of man must tax itself in detecting the great airship. And when I, Blanchard, shall have done this, then De Rozier and Lunardi must admit that their aerial experiments are as nothing."

Even as he stood there on that deck—"out at the elbows," as history tells—Blanchard was surrounded by and standing upon the very articles and tools of his trade. They were the highly important remains of his last balloon, wrecked a few weeks before. There was the valve, the great ring, the net, the grapnel anchor and a few odds and ends of cordage and silk. In other words, he had saved the "fittings." And a century and a quarter later, his direct descendants, the airplane gang, would be salvaging the "fittings" from their wrecks. And all this with one and the same great idea, the idea of building another ship of the air, and the idea of carrying on into the very teeth of death. All the way, for a full hundred and fifty years now, determined men have salvaged the fittings.

So stepping ashore at Dover, he went up to London. His last few francs—Blanchard was never very flush—were spent providing drinks for the men of the press, gathered there in the pub of the Quill & Inkpot for a bit of free drinking at the newcomer's invitation and expense. Blanchard, as was his way, took that brief opportunity to tell the Londoners just how good he really was. The men of the press were in full accord with the hopes, plans and ambitions and ale of the Frenchman.

Even now, with bowed heads, the English scribes must tell Blanchard that there was no ready money for his proposed promotion. They knew of no Englishman whose bent was in that direction. But wait! There's an American doctor, John Jeffries, practicing and championing the arts in London. And, 'tis said, this doctor has been sending small free balloons aloft ever since the Montgolfiers startled the Continent with their first paper balloon.

Jean Pierre Blanchard went to contact this Dr. Jeffries right away, *tout de suite.*

"How much money?" Dr. Jeffries asked.

"Five thousand dollars, *Monsieur le Docteur,*" Blanchard guessed, "should be a great sufficiency for the experiment."

"What's that you say—two thousand dollars?" the American snapped.

"Three thousand, *Monsieur le Docteur,*" Blanchard tried.

"And high as a Tory on the top branch, at that!" added the Yank. "However, Monsieur Blanchard, I'll find that amount of money for your Channel crossing on one condition."

"Name it, *Monsieur le Docteur,*" enthused Blanchard, rolling his hands. "For you, anything! Command your poor servant."

"That one condition and provision is that I, *Monsieur le Docteur,* cross the Channel with you."

Monsieur Jean Pierre Blanchard, the little guy with the big idea, had no desire to share first Channel-crossing honors with anybody. Enough that this American be allowed to furnish the wherewithal for the grand experiment, to say nothing of taking him along to lasting honor and glory. Not so good!

"But the balloon, *Monsieur le Docteur,* it will not lift the weight of us two, the great weight!" Blanchard protested.

"Weight?" snapped the Boston man. "Great weight of us two? Name of a pig, Blanchard, where do you get that stuff? Great weight! I go but one-fifty-six. As for you, you don't scale one hundred pounds with a bedpan in each hand. Great weight of us two!"

"One hundred fifteen pounds, *Mon-*

sieur le Docteur," Blanchard corrected. "That is my weight. But, added to the weight of crew, my great balloon must carry provisions, oars, wings, a crate of pigeons, instruments of navigation, anchors, my so-little lap dog, and many other articles of dire necessity.

For a fact, Blanchard was in the habit of carrying all those articles as listed.

"I go," Dr. Jeffries finally said, "or my money stays."

Jean Pierre Blanchard had to think fast. This American doctor seemed adamant. Look him in the eye, and that one look tells you that the good doctor has not been talking for fun. He wants a ride. Blanchard tells himself that he will take the good doctor not only for his ride, but he'll take him down the line. Take him down the line for all of three thousand dollars.

DOCTOR JOHN JEFFRIES, however, was a good Yankee. He paid all the bills, including Blanchard's keep, but he kept books on Blanchard, getting everything signed on the line, and having receipted evidence that he was the man who really owned the great balloon that was in the building process. But never, at any stage of the preparations, did little Jean Pierre, the world's first barnstormer, relinquish his firm conviction that the coming Channel crossing should by all rights be a solo hop. His every idea and thought, his every scheme and dream, worked along that line.

Late in October the great aerial globe of Monsieur Jean Pierre Blanchard, according to the London press, was all set to rise from the ground, go places and startle the watching world. All England was agog. The balloon was according to the Charles school. That is, it was an inflammable gas airship, hydrogen being its power of lift.

There came a day when Blanchard announced that he and an English gentleman of worth, Dr. John Sheldon, would ascend from the grounds of the Royal Military Academy. Dr. Jeffries had been sold down the river; and try as he might, the good American doctor found himself unable to head off that ascent. Thus, in one well-advertised stroke, Blanchard was to carry aloft the first Englishman ever to ascend in a balloon. Dr. Sheldon, of course, paid well for the honor.

Tricky little Blanchard tried to work a sandy on Dr. Sheldon at the last minute, claiming that the lift of the balloon was not up to expectations. So, as it would seem, the doctor must step out and allow Blanchard and his pet lap dog the honors. But the good Dr. Sheldon, like Jeffries, couldn't be talked, shrugged or gesticulated out of the voyage. So Blanchard, put to the thing by a howling throng of onlookers, took Dr. Sheldon aloft for a brief half-hour hop, then landed.

When the doctor stepped out, Blanchard and his pet lap dog sailed off for a real voyage of seventy-five miles. So that was that; and the balloon had proven its worth. Dr. Jeffries came in time to watch and follow as close as his horse could pursue.

During November and part of December Jean Pierre Blanchard got away with a lot of first-class stalling, in spite of the fact that Dr. Jeffries continued to ride him close and hard. The Frenchman, though, was the mechanic on the job, and if he said the balloon still needed fixing, who was Dr. Jeffries to say that such was not the case? Blanchard, however, just to prove that he was on the up and up, actually sold the American a seat in the balloon for an additional five hundred dollars. And still Jean Pierre stalled, stalled and talked and stalled.

Then, along toward New Year's, of 1785, word reached Dr. Jeffries that crafty Jean Pierre had carted the balloon down to Dover. Rumor said that

the little Frenchman was nicely established on the grounds of Dover Castle, from which place he would rise and fly.

Dr. Jeffries flew into a bit of Yank rage. He hied himself down to Dover. With him went the receipted proof that the balloon was really his. But the governor of Dover Castle, trying to avoid all trouble, advised the American that he could fly his kite anywhere except on the castle grounds. So Dr. Jeffries went down to the waterfront, canvassed all the pubs, and came back to the gates of Dover Castle with an ugly mob.

The castle's garrison wasn't very strong. It may be a question whether the doctor and his hearties could have stormed the gates and taken the balloon, but the spirit was there. And the governor guessed that he'd best lend an ear to the claims of the outraged, war-like American.

An agreement was reached; and once more Jean Pierre Blanchard promised that he, with the doctor, would get under way and conquer the Channel during the coming week. Forthwith Dr. Jeffries paid off his army of waterfront rats—only to take up his old watch on Jean Pierre Blanchard, first of the world's dirty-shirt aerial barnstormers.

BY KEEPING the prod to Jean Pierre, Dr. Jeffries got some signs of promising action during that first week of January. Also, by paying a few more bills, the materials necessary for hydrogen generation were secured. And on the seventh of the month, along toward midmorning, inflation was actually under way. While the balloon was slowly swelling to its gas, Jean Pierre was loading the car with the "necessities" of flight —of that so-long flight over the Channel.

But no joking, here, about that so-long flight; for that first Channel flight, coming as it did during the second year of ballooning, was no small undertaking. It was one brave try.

They had with them oars, light things with which to row their way if necessary. Then there was a "fly"—a sort of sail. They had letters in containers —the first air mail. A compass and other instruments, including Dr. Jeffries' famous barometer. There were a few bottles of brandy, some biscuits and apples, to say nothing of a few hampers of food. Then there was reading matter, a few copies of the French edition of Blanchard's own "Voyage with Dr. Sheldon." There were flags and a pair of cork life-jackets. Then, of course, there was the small lap dog of Jean Pierre.

Noon arrived, and soon one o'clock was close at hand. It was now time for a final weighing off. Sand bag after sand bag, good and needed ballast, had to be removed from the car. Finally, with both men aboard, the hold-down men turned her loose, just for a trial, and the craft failed to rise. Then Jean Pierre yelled his I-told-you-so!

"Ah, you see, *Monsieur le Docteur*, you see! The balloon she will not rise. It is as I have said, we two are far too heavy," he wailed. "Now it will be necessary that you step out, *Monsieur le Docteur*. Then I, Blanchard, shall cross the English Channel and tell all France of the great sacrifice to science which you have made."

"Sacrifice to science be damned!" said Dr. Jeffries. "But it will be highly necessary that you remove a few suits of clothes, two or three overcoats, and toss one small lap dog out."

While the guards and governor of Dover Castle stood aghast and agog, Dr. Jeffries laid hands upon the small Blanchard and went to work divesting the wiggly Frenchman of the first two or three layers of cumbersome, heavy winter clothes; the while Jean Pierre Blanchard was fighting back, calling to high heaven for help.

Then, of a sudden, Dr. Jeffries' hand struck something very solid on the per-

son of Jean Pierre Blanchard.

"What's this, you little son of a rock scorpion?" the good doctor demanded.

And so demanding, the good doctor tore away the last two or three layers of heavy clothes. And there, at the bottom of it all, small Jean Pierre bulged greatly at the middle. Jean Pierre was wearing a bank courier's great money belt; and the many pouches of that wide belt were each packed solid with lead.

Roughly then the Yank removed fully fifty pounds of those weighty ingots from the world's first, scheming barnstormer.

So, with that dead weight gone and any number of heavy rags shed by Jean Pierre, the balloon was able to take on three ten-pound bags of sand.

The good doctor, wearing very little in the line of outside clothing, save a hat and jerkin of leopardskin, even allowed small Blanchard the joy of again donning a few undervests and one great overcoat. However, Blanchard kicked like a steer. He was for carrying all that junk, including the lap dog, and all the paying passengers on earth weren't going to stand between him and his ideal of flight.

"It is that you desire me to freeze, *Monsieur le Docteur,*" he wailed; and his teeth actually drummed a tattoo in the chill air of the raw January afternoon. "The clothing and the dog, the weight of those things is as nothing. But your great poundage—ah, it is that weight which must surely put us into the sea! *Non! Non!* It is nothing but suicide—nothing but murder—if you are to demand that I set sail on such a hazardous voyage."

"You won't get a bit damper than I, Blanchard," Dr. Jeffries remarked, "in the event that we finish in the water. And . . . anyway, you have your cork life-belt and there should be a great plenty of both French and English boats within view."

"Easy to say. Easy to picture," wailed Blanchard. "But then, such being the fine outlook, on one condition do we start."

"Name it. Name it, and have done with this delay!" the Yankee doctor demanded.

"If we are threatened—as we surely shall be—with a fall into the water, you must agree to jump and free my balloon of your great weight," nasty little Jean Pierre Blanchard stipulated.

"Agreed," said Dr. John Jeffries.

Blanchard made one more try. He demanded, calling the fat governor of Dover Castle to witness, that the American must promise to pay in full the balloon's cost in the event that said balloon should be lost owing to his, the doctor's failure to jump. And to that, also, the American agreed. In other words, Dr. Jeffries was to pay Blanchard for the loss of Jeffries' property.

Crowding the cliffs and shoreline beyond the walls and battlements of Dover Castle, thousands of eager townsfolk awaited the fateful minute of ascent. The waters of the Channel were likewise alive with large and small craft of all types. One o'clock was the hour, and the time had arrived. Jean Pierre Blanchard, spreading himself in a last-minute snatch of speech-making, saluted the fat governor of the castle and ordered the hold-down men to stand clear.

The great hydrogen balloon swelled from the ground. Not with speed. Not to a great altitude. It just went up, for the craft was still very much overloaded, owing to the fact that she carried far too much poundage in the line of queer odds and ends. But they passed out over the chalk cliffs, out over the Channel.

The mighty-voiced cheer that sent them on their way more than made up for the lack of enthusiasm that Blanchard must have felt. However, the balloon was carrying on, quitting the shore and winning a little more ceiling.

THAT gaining of altitude, though, came through the sacrifice of their very limited thirty pounds of sand ballast. And the cheers of the Dover throngs were hardly left behind when the two airmen realized that the voyage ahead promised nothing but exciting moments. From the start, the only thing in their favor was the wind. Blanchard, knowing for sure now that the balloon was overloaded, tried to use his oars in the air and row back to land. But the balloon was in the one-way groove of the carrying wind, and the waterway was their way.

Within fifteen minutes of the departure from the cliffs of Dover, the last of the sand, including the empty sacks, had been dropped. Once more the craft was losing altitude, with a steady trend toward the water. The "wings" and the "fly" were dropped. Soon the grapnel anchor and its coil of rope went by the board. And all that grub, apples and biscuits, were sent down to the fish of the Channel.

When two o'clock came, with mid-Channel won, the waters of the Channel were just about reached, too. The two men worked like mad then.

The boat-like car of the balloon was rich in linings and heavy ornaments, as were nearly all the cars of those early balloons. Now all those gay linings and ornaments had to go the way of all other droppable things. Withal, and after all, the balloon hardly held its own. Added to the grief of too much load, the bag was losing gas at an awful rate. By the end of that first hour of flight that great bag's lower quarter was slack. So the frantic work of lightening ship went wildly on into the second hour of journeying.

As many ropes as could be reached were cut away. Overside went the compass and other instruments dear to the flying heart of Jean Pierre Blanchard. And now, with all those things gone, Blanchard guessed that this was a fine time and place for the Yank to fulfill his bargain, step down and start swimming; even though there were no boats or ships handy there in mid-Channel.

"Your agreement, *Monsieur le Docteur,*" Jean Pierre pleaded. "Is it not time that you be doing as you promised? Now go, *monsieur,* go!"

"Eh, no. Not I. This balloon isn't going into the water, my friend," Dr. Jeffries told the Frenchman. "Let's you and I separate ourselves from a few pounds of superfluous clothing. Come, strip off that great coat, those two undercoats, the boots and even the trousers."

As before said, that January day was raw. But by 2:30 two near-naked voyagers of the sky were still aloft, and with a good view of the French coast in their eyes.

When three-quarters of the distance had been covered, and the cold waters still reached for them, the two men strapped into their cork lifebelts and prepared to cut away the car, after climbing aloft to the great ring. But Jeffries, being a doctor, decided that they might yet lighten ship some more by expelling the food from their stomachs.

By the time that performance had been completed, the balloon was actually lower than the tops of the French cliffs ahead. Land seemed to close then. Too bad they couldn't do something toward wishing her through those last few miles! Again, as at mid-Channel, Jean Pierre pleaded with the American to be a sport and take the dive. Why, he argued, should two get wet especially when it was the American who knew how to swim?

At that moment, when the first of the car's supporting ropes was being cut, the balloon came under the influence of some new air condition. It began to gain altitude, not slowly, but with an up-rush. So, riding high and sitting

pretty for the first time on the whole trip, they made their French coast landfall between Griz Nez and Calais.

From the coast the craft carried on inland for a dozen miles. Then, with the safety of land gained, it again lost altitude with great speed. It was just three o'clock. The cooling effect of the late winter afternoon was chilling the gas and rapidly bringing the voyage to its glorious end. The town of Ardres was hard by, and the forest of Guines just below. The balloon, by then, was plenty low, too—so low that Dr. Jeffries reached down, grabbed a double handful of treetops, lost his grip, grabbed again, held on!

The headway of the balloon had been almost killed. Little Jean Pierre Blanchard valved some hydrogen. Jeffries gave way on his treetop, and the balloon settled into a nearby field. A perfect finish for the first Channel crossing.

Time: two hours flat.

It was all over but the cheering. Calais remained up all that night to see that there was a great plenty of that—for hadn't a Frenchman, Jean Pierre Blanchard, dared the very skies and crossed the English Channel? And the American? Yes, he, too, was a brave man. And a lucky man too, for high was the honor of first crossing a sea in the company of the great Jean Pierre Blanchard.

Dr. John Jeffries, so they tell, spent a lifetime laughing at the dizzy experiences of that January afternoon; and his declining years, back in New England, were made happy by the memory. Considering the small size of "fortunes" in that day, it cost the good doctor plenty. But, being the American in the case, he had the glorious privilege of charging the whole thing to experience.

As for Monsieur Jean Pierre Blanchard, world's first dirty-shift barnstorming aviator, he cashed in. Little Jean Pierre came into the first real jack of his out-at-the-elbows career. His king, dull and dizzy Louis XVI, awarded Jean Pierre not a sou less than 12,000 francs, cash money. On top of that, Louis XVI arranged an annual pension of some 1300 francs for Jean Pierre. With all that money on demand, the little guy could afford to call in the boys of the press and tell them just how good he was going to be when next he flew; and Jean Pierre Blanchard told them.

"You might as well turn in and get a full package of sleep," said Anderson.

STOLEN HEADS

By CAPTAIN FERDERICK MOORE

ANDERSON was on his knees in the coral sand before our little tent. I could see his shoulders against the phosphorescent breakers on the beach about fifty feet from us. What seemed to be a stick nailed to a coco palm was really the dark line of the trader's rifle barrel. He was aiming toward the jungle. One of his shoulders was twisted low and his head was askew as he laid his cheek against the stock. The moonlight over the shore was ivory dust powdered on the land, but the sea beyond glittered with a ghastly sheen.

I threw back a blanket and reached for the auto gun on my right hip. Guns on the Island of Singing Beaches were regular sleeping gear. Headhunters will take big chances to get a white man's head. Anderson had not crawled out of his blankets in the middle of the night with a rifle just to enjoy the moonlight. Therefore I knew better than to speak to the trader.

For several minutes I listened before moving again. There was plenty to hear. But I was listening for a sound that would mean danger. The breeze that shook the coconut tops made a tune like fairy castenets. That breeze was irregular and it was between the gusts that I hoped to hear something that put Anderson's rifle muzzle toward the jungle.

I could hear the wash of the gentle surf, the sea breathing against the island. Continuous sound becomes silence in the tropics. At any instant I expected to hear somebody open a wine bottle. That would be a headhunter shooting a poisoned arrow out of a blow gun. If he made a bull's eye on Anderson, the trader would be dead in fifteen minutes

and I would be the only white man left on the island. And a dozen headhunters dead by the trader's rifle would hardly pay for losing him.

I saw Anderson sway forward slowly. He might be falling asleep. I knew better. He thrust his rifle forward from him. His twisted shoulders went lower. His elbows moved to the front. Then he eased himself down into the white sand. The rifle butt drew back to his shoulder. One hand steadied the barrel while the other returned to the trigger.

He was no longer visible against the tops of the breakers beachward. His white pajamas merged him into the coral dust. Only the black sheen of the rifle was visible as I watched. I wondered why I could not see the top of the trader's head. Next instant I knew the answer—he was wearing a white canvas cap with the soft brim pulled down over his forehead and his ears. That was what Anderson called camel-flagging himself so he could not be seen.

The rifle muzzle lifted slowly. It remained fixed at a slight angle from the sand. Anderson twisted himself in spasmodic jerks. He was digging deeper into the sand, burrowing downward. I saw the moonlight glinting on the nickel of the magazine gadget.

I crawled from under my blanket. The back wall of the oiled silk tent would give me a view toward the jungle if I lifted the loose edge of fabric.

Before I had oozed myself wholly clear from the blanket the tent top puffed downward under heavy impact. Anderson outside, fired at the same instant. I jumped to the report. The first bullet must have passed close over the top of the oiled silk only a couple of feet above my head.

I heard the soft rattle of powder grains on the delicate cloth above me. The yellowish cone-shaped flame from Anderson's muzzle took shape in my open eyes and remained as a luminous image as I stared at the blackness of the tent top.

Anderson let go again—and again. Before the sound of his shots died in my ears I heard another and different sound. Something sliced into the silk over me and two stars became visible in the silky blackness. They were really four cornered rips in the cloth. In the center there was a black spot.

Two soft thuds in the sand about a foot from where I lay and the tent had two new poles, spear shafts, reaching up to the top. They had been cast upward out of the jungle, then curved down to pierce the tent. The spear points, made from hard wood, were studded with tiny white spots—human bone touched with the deadly poison used on the Mawa River by headhunters.

"Damn you!" I heard Anderson growl. I looked out the front of the tent and saw three spears standing in the sand near the trader, all at varying angles, but slanting toward the jungle from where they had come with the two through the tent.

"If you'd count to twenty, Anderson, you'd avoid the use of bad language."

"You stay back in that tent. Moonlight's not healthy on this island."

"They put two through the tent. Bang goes twenty dollars for a new top."

"You might as well come out then if it's leakin' spears."

I crawled to Anderson's side. It was close to midnight by my illuminated wrist watch. Moonlight always fascinates me on tropical beaches. Besides, I like plenty of room for running purposes when the nearby jungle is full of headhunters.

We watched the play of light and shadow along the edge of the thick brush, as the slight breeze moved the heavy pendant leaves over the sands. The moonlight formed a lacy pattern of black along the jungle's lip. We knew well that among those shimmering shadows of silent black surf against white sand, there were men moving cautiously. Our difficulty was to distinguish between the shadow of a playing leaf and a brown

man moving to throw a spear or to lift a blow gun to the firing position.

"I got one of those spear throwers, I'm pretty sure," said Anderson.

"See him fall?"

"Saw the shadow I fired at stop moving. See that hump on the coral drift to the right? Just beyond that, a still shadow."

I saw it. All other shadows swayed, gently. Dead men are not moved by the breeze. "Only one?" I asked.

"Two more deeper in, I'd say, where they throw no shadow. You might as well turn in and get a full package of sleep."

"What if they rush us in the tent?"

"They're done for tonight, I'm fairly sure."

But Anderson was no sooner finished speaking before we saw three pieces of jungle lace detach themselves from the line of vegetation and become independent pieces of moving black on the moonlit sand.

Anderson fired. I cut loose with one automatic. There was a squeal. One shadow collapsed and became a tiny black island of irregular shape. Another shadow moved out to it and the black form was snatched back into the jungle. Anderson fired again. The shadows glided back to the protecting wall of black and were lost in it.

Presently we heard a drum not far away. It spoke with a low and sonorous roar, talking to the distant hills. When the hill drums began to answer I listened carefully. *"Four—two—one,"* they said, spacing well the gaps between the word beats.

"What's four—two—one?" asked Anderson.

"The party in there sent to get us have fumbled the job and they're getting what for. It means down tools for the night."

We saw swaying shadows swing inward toward the jungle lip; the breeze did not move those shadows out again. The hill chiefs had spoken and they had to be obeyed.

Anderson squirmed upward out of the sand and shook himself. "I need a little beauty sleep. Just my luck to happen to be awake when I heard feet moving in the sand. Come on."

We plucked the spears from the sand and moved back to the tent. Anderson made wholly inadequate remarks about the spears sticking up through the silk tent top. We pulled them out, to tape the holes in the morning, smoked a couple of cigarettes flavored with Anderson's corn ointment and went back to sleep.

A little after sunrise there was a soft breeze from seaward that waked me. The riffling of the beach sand came to my ears. The larger of the tiny coral particles in the sand, not yet ground into dust by the action of wind or water, move under wind pressure over the dry beach and produce a vague whisper of melody. It can only be heard above the sound of the surf when the wind is in the right quarter and the breakers on the outer reef do not grumble too loudly.

These musical sands are what gives the island the native name of Many Any Pantay, (not an accurate spelling of the Malay words) but that is the pronunciation used by skippers in those waters. Of late years the traders have been using a free translation of the native name into English—Island of Singing Beaches.

I WAKED Anderson. He blinked his eyes against the blood-red glare of the sun on the horizon at sea. And he reached for a gun butt. "What's wrong?" he asked.

"Listen."

The trader shut one eye and twisted his mouth into an unpleasant grin. "Sands are singing, hey."

"You know what that means—I've told you."

Anderson nodded and crawled out from under his blanket. "Sounds like the boilin' of a kettle in hell. Next you

know we'll git a whiff of sulphur through the back door of the same place."

"Want to go ahead up the river and try to trade after hearing that nice little funeral tune?"

"Beach can sing for all of me. I'm going after gold up the Mawa."

I pulled on my pants and reached for the little alcohol stove to set the coffee boiling. I happened to glance seaward. Beyond the purplish water made by the morning sun and the streak of jade green that marked the shoal at the reef end, I saw a schooner. A porthole brass twinkled at me as the schooner lifted to a swell. I saw a boat putting off from her, with a white man in it, by the big sun helmet astern. Another figure in white stood by the mizzen shrouds of the schooner looking ashore through binoculars.

Anderson came out of the tent and had a look. "That'll be Cap'n Marston's schooner. He bought her when she lay on the beach down at Straw Hat Island so sun-dried that you could look through her like a chink piazza and she had spewed her oakum. He's made money with her. But what's he doin' over this way?"

"You can ask him—he's in that boat coming ashore, isn't he?"

"Naw. That's Marston lookin' ashore. He ain't goin' to git himself threaded on a spear." And Anderson went looking for a clean shirt.

By the time the boat from the schooner beached we were sitting at our coffee. If the man coming ashore wanted to see us he could see our tent and both of us sitting out under the sun fly at breakfast. We knew the island manners of minding our own business.

The stranger walked up toward us. He was a young man, not over thirty, with skin somewhat sun-browned, but he did not have the look of a man at home in the islands. He wore cord riding breeches, laced boots, a fishnet shirt under a blue outer shirt open at the throat and polo sleeves. We could see that his arms were powerful, his shoulders heavy, and as he touched his sun helmet in a kind of salute there was a pleasant smile on his lips, but mostly in the wrinkles about his gray eyes.

"My name's Pettengill. Hope I'm not intruding. I'm looking for a hotel on this beach which Captain Marston says is further up, but seeing your tent, I came ashore here. Do you know where the hotel of a Chinese named Jim Sing is?"

Anderson and I were on our feet by this time. We liked the looks of the youngster, but we wanted to know a lot more about him before we told him too much about ourselves.

"Come on in the shade and have a shot of coffee," said Anderson. We gave our names and folded some blankets for the top of our best stone seat. Pettengill glanced at the spears along the tent pegs and took off his helmet.

"I'm studying headhunters, sir. Took a lot of pictures down in the southerly group few months back, and I'm working on a book about the early history of these islands."

Anderson blinked an eye at me. "There ain't much to write about here. Natives are just like all the others in these waters."

"That's what most people think, but I'm an anthropologist and ethnologist. I expect to get a university degree as a result of my researches. Got a theory that I can find heads in the headhouses up in the hills that'll prove races migrated from India to these islands by way of the Malay Peninsula. They moved past Borneo to the north and south of New Guinea. The native headhunters three or four hundred years ago killed most of the strangers, and those heads have been handed down through the generations, having been kept as tribal trophies."

"Expect to go up in the hills and pick out the heads you want?" I asked.

"Certainly."

"You've picked out a job for yourself."

"You think these natives are dangerous?"

"No, only annoyin'," said Anderson. "They had a little spear practice last night and our tent'll leak next rain."

"You mean you're going up the river?" I asked.

Pettengill shook his head. "No. A German scientist tells me the Mawa is a war road, always used for raids in the old days. I'm going up through the jungles through the pass."

Anderson was startled but he concealed his surprise. "We intended to go up the river—git the sea tribes to paddle us up."

"I've a rough map," said Pettengill. "The beach end is not far from Jim Sing's hotel. I hope to trade a little with the natives, but if I can't, then I'll get heads somehow."

"What kind of trade?" asked Anderson.

"Cheap gimcracks, mostly magic goods. Ink which is invisible when you use it but the writing shows up later, paper blossoms that squirt perfume when you press a little rubber bulb, snakes that lift their heads when you set fire to their tails. I've always managed to get on friendly relations with primitive races with such stuff."

"These hillmen are dangerous," I warned Pettengill. "I've been up the river."

"You have?" Pettengill was all eagerness. "If you got back safely, you must know it's possible to make contact with the tribes."

"We made contact all right—and a couple of men with me named Bannister and McLaw were killed. I escaped by a little luck and my natural stupidity."

"What about this map of yours?" asked Anderson, afraid that I would scare Pettengill out of a trip up the river or through the jungles. I could see that the trader had an idea working in the back of his head and all Anderson's ideas had profit tied to them like tails to kites.

Pettengill brought out his map and let us study it. Only a rude sketch, we knew at once that it was accurate. But the upper reaches of the river were only approximate in directions, but it placed the first village properly down below the pass.

"Where'd you get this map?" I asked.

"From a German who knew a German named Hanf who is a trader here on the island."

"Hanf is dead. The natives put a blow gun arrow in him," I said.

"Where can I find this Jim Sing?"

"You can't," said Anderson. "They got his head—and his blind flute player, his cook and his barboy."

Pettengill took the report as a routine matter. The fervor of science was upon him and a head lost here or there was of little importance. Also, I suspect that he felt that perhaps Anderson and I wanted to scare him off the island for our own reasons.

"Would it be impertinent to ask why you're here, gentlemen?"

"Gold," said Anderson. "We, too want to make trade contact. Let me show you the line I'm carrying." He unlashed his blanket roll and dumped out our fifteen factory-made human heads.

"You'll note," began Anderson in his best sales manner, "that these skulls are cast, then this brownish and wrinkled skin is put on by dipping the cast skull in a colloidal liquid. The blond hair is the same as is used on dolls, chemicals put on these rust stains which look like dried blood, the shrunken ears are rubber, and the porcelain teeth are drilled and have brass fillings. So there is no doubt in the minds of the natives that these are the heads of white men, dried, smoked and prepared exactly as the headhunters of these islands require. With one of these heads a young man can get him a wife."

"What an extraordinary idea!" said the amazed Pettengill as he examined the heads.

"We've let you in on a secret. It is a legal business, and it is really a humane mission. By selling these heads to the natives we will do away with the necessity of headhunting by the tribes, saving lives and increasing the native population."

"And is it desirable to increase the population of such bloodthirsty natives, sir?"

"Sure! The more natives, the more jungle products they'll gather for trade with white men. They won't want to kill us to get our heads. Civilization will penetrate the island group and there'll be a white man's government established."

"They'll buy our trade gin," I declared. "Want cotton cloth with dancing mice printed on it, the girls will want our latest styles in beach pajamas, and then the government will collect taxes from 'em to support gunboats to blast hell out of 'em if they kill missionaries and traders and gold prospectors."

Anderson scowled at me and swiftly changed the subject. "You'll want to be well armed, mister, if you go up that trail to the hills."

"I never carry arms when I'm dealing with wild tribes. Guns always stir up hostility toward me and makes my work difficult."

"Well, don't go and make things difficult for yourself," said Anderson. "Me, I like to have a little lead with powder behind it. I sleep better." He gave me a look to caution me against mentioning dead natives up in the edge of the jungle.

"I'm here only in the hope of advancing human knowledge," said Pettengill. "But what I want to suggest is that we all go up the trail together."

"I like the idea. But I warn you that we intend to get about a thousand dollars in gold per head—or we'll steal the gold out of that river. We're humane as hell about this business, but we've got no morals when it comes to gold."

Pettengill grinned. "My whole career depends on what I get out of this trip. I *must* have heads, trade or no trade. Failing other methods, I'll burglarize the headhouses."

"Then get your gear ashore and we'll go down to the ruins of Jim Sing's hotel and hit that trail up the hills."

When Pettengill moved down the beach, I said to Anderson, "That's a highly educated man."

Anderson nodded. "Maybe we can learn a thing or two from him. College guys are always readin' things in books."

"But this man has had practical jungle experience," I insisted.

"Aw, he's a claw-hammer coat explorer," growled the trader. "We got to git out of here before he runs across them dead men over jungle way."

BY the time Pettengill returned, Anderson and I were packed. At once the three of us began the trek down the beach. We marched on the hard wet shingle, and without saying anything to Pettengill, both of us kept a wary eye on the jungle lip some fifty yards from us.

We found the ashes of the hotel and the charred bamboo poles of the timbers still standing just as we'd left them, in flight from pursuing hillmen.

Pettengill's attention was caught at once by the cast iron safe in which Jim Sing had kept his nuggets and cash. The hinges were melted off by the natives. Jim's precious nuggets, gained by his dangerous trade with the men who killed him, were gone. We found packets of banknotes tied up with thread-like copper wire and burned to tinder. The packets broke under our feet and scattered on the breeze like a swarm of black butterflies.

Next we found the primitive forge

used by the natives to remove the safe door. That steamed Pettengill up.

"What a find!" he exclaimed. "Look here! They used charcoal in sand for the fire, and their bellows is made by sewing up the belly of a crocodile. Contrary to the best scientific authorities, the natives are advanced beyond the stone age. They smelt metal! This will make an important chapter in my book."

I could have told him that the sea tribes at the mouth of the Mawa brought the art of forge building to Singing Sand Island. I knew the kit we found had been stolen from the sea tribes. But Anderson and I were after gold and we did not want to get all haired up about science.

We led the way up the beach to trail end. As we approached the jungle Anderson stopped for a minute to adjust the shoulder roll with our heads. Pettengill and myself, a little ahead, stopped as Anderson gave a warning cry.

I turned to see Pettengill plunge forward and dive into the sand. Anderson had struck him a swift blow that sent the professor sprawling. Then Anderson's left fist swung and caught me on my right shoulder. I fell beside Pettengill. As I went down, I saw Anderson drop to his knees and reach for the butt of his right automatic.

We heard blow guns discharged. There must have been a dozen of them, fired in a ragged volley. I saw reflected in the sand a tiny flight of beetle shadows—a flight of arrows from *sumpitans*. They passed a couple of feet above our heads. Those poisoned arrows would have found us but for Anderson's knocking Pettengill and myself down.

I saw the line of blow gun muzzles sticking from the jungle edge. The brown and polished blow gun ends drew back out of sight. Pettengill spluttered. His mouth was full of sand. I thrust out my left hand and kept him from getting to his feet. Anderson was firing, but between shots he got in a word in a low tone. "No hits," he ordered.

So I fired high, knowing that he wanted to kill no headhunters if it could be avoided. Those men were the same party, we felt sure, who had thrown spears during the night, or another party sent down to get us because the spearmen had been called in.

"What's the trouble?" asked Pettengill when Anderson and I quit firing.

"Want to git blow-gunned? I had to knock you down. Now how do you feel about going up that trail and tryin' to gentle our natives?"

Pettengill got his his feet and picked sand out of his ears. "I've got to have heads."

Anderson laughed. "All the headhunters ain't in jungles—they come out of our best colleges." He slipped a new magazine into his pistol.

I led the way into the trail, Pettengill behind me, and the trader close up. All about us we felt secret eyes. But the blow gun party had skipped. They knew we would save them a lot of trouble by going up to the pass. It would be simpler for them to kill us nearer home and save the trouble of packing our heads through the jungle.

We made fairly good time up the trail. It was really a tunnel through great morasses of vines and underbrush or higher trees where the earth was red instead of lava. No trees had been cut to make this close path. Vines and saplings had been deflected and tied with rattans which lasted until the trees broke the confining ties. The work had been done for generations by the hands of countless natives, skilled in moulding thick jungle to their desires.

At noon we made a dry camp. Leeches had got under our socks in spite of all precautions. They were fat and red, gorged with blood, and had to be removed by salt.

Before night we got through the pass and could see the river valley. Naturally, we proceeded with caution. I was suspicious of our easy progress. There was every sign that we were walking into

a trap. But as the island and the whole Mawa Valley is a trap for white men we could expect nothing else. We knew what we were doing and were willing to take the chances.

FROM the cover of a clump of shrubs we used our glasses and studied the lay of the land beneath us. It was easy to locate the rattan bridge where Bannister and McLaw were killed. Below that was the first village.

"See that bend in the river?" Anderson asked me as he peered through his glasses. "On the upper side of the point —what're those brownish things on the river shore?" He handed me the glasses.

"Bamboo rafts used as ferries," I told him. "Floored with laced rattans."

"Just below the town," said Anderson. "We'd better keep them rafts in mind. One of 'em'll come in handy if we get in any jam down at that village."

We were well down into the valley when night came. We located the village by the fire glows. We were within probably five hundred yards of the nearest fire when we left the trail and cut off toward the river. This was not difficult for us. We had come up against a clever jungle wall of laced vines and bamboo poles which protected the village. We knew better than to try and force our way through that green wall. There would be trap spears in it and all kinds of ingenious pitfalls to snag a man going through.

The purpose of that wall was to swing an intruder toward the river. Like a hedge fence carefully trimmed, that great jungle barrier was designed to make us go where the fighting men repelled raiders when the tribes were at war.

The wall ended in a glade not far from the river. There we could see the ladders reaching up into the trees to the tree houses. Dark shapes went up or came down those ladders while we watched, the low glare of the fires on the ground giving us the outlines of the moving figures.

A breeze came down the river canyon. That meant the wind was against us from the village. We knew that the occasional barking of dogs did not mean the dogs knew we were near. As those dogs were kept for food instead of watching, and not running at large, we had no fear of them.

We went to the river and located the rafts. There were four, but three were drawn so far up on the lava rocks that they would float only when the river was high with freshets during the rainy season. The fourth raft was in the water, tied with rattans and supplied with poles. Anderson cut all but one of the mooring lines. We left our packs and our rifles close by. The river would be our best line of retreat. We would have no chance in flight up to the pass with all the fighting men of the village tearing along after us.

We studied the place carefully. The village was on flat ground, cleared of everything but big trees. The flat had overhanging cliffs which had slowly eroded away by river floods. It was not possible to see very far down the river from the rafts.

In a thicket near a rice field we found a shelter. It was only a roof of matting lashed slantwise to bamboo posts. There were charms tied to the posts to scare away evil spirits. It was only some ten yards from the raft, and from it we could see into the tree village.

We located the headhouse at our end of the village. Pettengill was determined to get into that headhouse. There was no use arguing with him on the point. He set out with a pencil-size flashlight, a bundle of his trinkets to leave in payment for any heads he swiped, and a canvas bag with rope handles to bring back the heads. He went up to the end of the jungle wall to enter the village. He was to run that way if he found himself pursued, and make for the trail, then double back and join us at the rafts. We

cautioned him not to run if he was alarmed, but to drop to the ground and freeze. The trick would be to lead the pursuing natives past us and we would get them in flank while he made his swing down from the trail for the river to join us.

Before long we saw him move into the grove near the headhouse after he walked slowly across the hundred yards of open space at our end of the village. He declared that he could learn all he wanted of the heads he was to lift by twenty minutes if he had luck.

An hour passed. We checked the time by our illuminated watch dials. We kept our eyes on the grove and our automatics ready.

"That's a bigger house than he thought," whispered Anderson.

"Probably full of heads—and he'll examine every last one of 'em."

"He's snagged," said Anderson a little later.

"He may see natives that we can't," I agreed.

"I don't depend much on these educated guys," grumbled Anderson, looking at his watch again.

"I'll bet he gets what he wants."

"Hope so. I need him in my business."

I WAS nervous myself when another hour passed. Dark shadows had been moving up and down ladders under the tree houses. There was too much quiet in that village for our good. It seemed to me that the natives were listening. Also, I had a hunch that they knew we were near the village.

Dogs whined. They were cuffed into silence—always a bad sign. My ears caught what struck me as covert conversations among the people up in the trees. We might be attacked at any minute. That sense of danger took possession of my mind.

The sharp call of a hornbill cut the night, another danger signal. It was cautionary rather than alarm. It was likely that the hillmen did not know exactly what was wrong but they were all on the alert. Unless we got out of there our pie was cooked.

"We got to go in and get that fellow," said Anderson.

"Maybe they've got him."

"We got to find out."

We sneaked up to the end of the wall and swung in toward the village. We felt our way carefully. My nerves were drawn taut. My sense of hearing was magnified. That village was fairly crawling with hillmen. I was just plain scared.

We got where we could see the headhouse with both sides visible against the river. Low voices were near us but we could not locate them. The air was clammily damp. A mist was rising from the river. The atmosphere was jacked up to carry sound a greater distance than we imagined.

We waited another twenty minutes. No sign of Pettengill. Again a hornbill called. The tones were madder than the first one I heard. It was a lot nearer to us. That last signal gave my hair a crawling sensation. We were in for trouble.

"We got to get into that headhouse," said Anderson. "Pet's in there—and maybe cornered."

We moved into the open. We could see the stars. There was a fire glowing redly in fire stones not a hundred yards from us. Fifty feet away a ladder led up to a tree house.

I'll admit that I had respect for Pettengill's nerve. He had crossed that open spot earlier in the evening with more people near him and all of them probably awake. We were right in the thick of the town instead of being on its outer edges.

We walked at a slow gait without crouching. In case we were seen in that gloom we hoped to be mistaken for natives. Haste, or a quick attempt to take cover, would betray us to any eye watching. We heard dogs growl. They were silenced.

Straight for the headhouse we moved. Anderson was in front of me, a little to my right. Ten yards from the building we swung to the right, then in a patch of blackness, swung back and reached the nearer end of the headhouse.

The building was about fifteen feet wide and all of fifty long. It was made of braided coconut fiber and leaves, lashed to upright bamboo poles, with a high-pitched roof of thatch on top. The low hanging gable ends were of carved wood decorated with bits of pearl shell inlaid. We passed between two great shark's jaws, propped open with sticks, as we drew nearer the end of the sacred head house.

A curtain covered the door in the end of the building. It was bordered with crocodile skins and pieces of flying fox skins. Luckily for us there were no loose ornaments to jangle when we had to move that curtain.

Anderson crawled in under the curtain and I followed. We lay still on the flooring for several minutes. Furtive footfalls came to our ears.

In a few minutes we heard a peculiar rattling sound—or a series of sounds. They were not loud, but of varying power. At first they came sharply clear but gradually died out. Then new and louder rattlings began. They seemed to be coming nearer. Something hollow was struck by other hollow objects, making a gentle clamor.

We caught a thin flash of light not a dozen feet from us. It was from Pettengill's pencil-size flashlight. It made a spot of brilliance on a brown object about the size of a man's hand.

What I saw in the tiny spot of light was a shrunken face—brown, wrinkled, smoke-dried. The upper teeth grinned into Pettengill's light. The lower jaw was missing. The eyelids were sewn together. It was a ghastly grin—a dead man laughing at the living.

I knew then what made the rattling sounds of a few minutes before. There were no lanes or aisles in that house, for hundreds of heads hung down from the rafters, each head on its own cord. Holes cut in the tops of the skulls let in tiny toggles on the ends of the braided fiber cords. There was not a foot between heads and the whole building was full of them from end to end, like a warehouse of sample bells. That was a ghastly store covering generations of garnering human skulls.

"Hey, Pet!" whispered Anderson with a whisper that almost lifted the thatch off the roof.

The light disappeared. "Who's that?" asked Pettengill.

"Who was you expectin'? A cop?"

"It's risky business to follow me here."

"Didn't you say you'd be back in twenty minutes?"

"I've not been here much longer."

"You been here better'n two hours. Where in the hell do you think you are—in a dime museum at Coney Island?"

"I've got a dozen fine specimens in the bag and——"

"And git out or you'll be a specimen yourself. Hornbills callin' all over the place. Ever read in a book that at this time of night hornbills mean danger?"

"I'm not alarmed. I don't intend to leave here until I've got what I want."

"Want me grinnin' at you for the next couple of thousand years from a string? Not my idea of a nice way to pass the time. Come out of that!"

I was standing with my back to the door curtain, my ear cocked for any sound outside. And I heard plenty. Bare feet were moving on hard ground, ladders creaked with the weight of men sneaking down from tree houses, and the jungle hush of danger was upon us.

Pettengill flashed his pencil light. "Look! I've found a Parsee head! I've got to make some measurements before I can be sure. And the Parsees come from Persia—India—to get killed here." He shut off his light and we heard him cut the line that suspended the head he

wanted. Then we heard the other heads in his sack rattle as he pouched his precious Parsee.

"Will you get to hell out of here, Parsees or no Parsees?" demanded Anderson, his patience at an end. "Follow us—and get goin'."

"Wait just a minute!" pleaded Pettengill. "There's a head near the door that's got a caste mark on the forehead. Man, I've proof there was the great migration from India across these islands. My monograph on the subject will crush all the theories of the savants of Europe about——"

The harsh cry of a hornbill broke in. The cry was repeated twice.

"You come along and to hell with servants here or in Europe. We've come for you and you're goin' if I have to throw you out on your ear with your bag of Parsees."

Anderson did not wait for an answer. He hurled himself forward and tackled Pettengill low. Both of them came crashing back upon me. We all fell through the curtain to the ground outside. Luckily, having a gun in each hand, I did not pull a trigger. Pettengill snatched up the bag of heads he dropped on his way out.

"Beat it!" growled Anderson. "Make for the wall end—follow me!"

Pettengill ran in Anderson's wake, his bag of heads rattling as he went. I holstered one of my guns and went after them. We knew then that the village was on the alert and it took no argument to convince Pettengill.

We heard cries of alarm. Our flight had been seen. Dogs began to bark in fury. Bare feet pattered over dry leaves. The runners, seen but vaguely at that moment, were after us.

This sudden turmoil broke upon us abruptly, though the hillmen were already crawling up on us before Anderson threw Pettengill out of the building. Flashes of his light had been seen. We arrived just in time to save him.

I made ten yards. A drum boomed so close that I might have hit it myself. The darkness shut in upon me—a darkness made by shadowy figures closing in. That drum turned the place into a bedlam. The trees over head took tongue and yelped at us. Other drums in the distance answered the one nearby. I heard the up-river villages begin asking questions.

I looked back over my shoulder as I ran. A line of shadows was making for the headhouse. That other black billow surged after us. Men howled. They wanted us headed off from the trail. We heard some breaking into the jungle, probably to get into a short cut so we could be cut off as we climbed the hill.

I caught up with Anderson and Pettengill. They were in the dark waiting for me to come up. A fire flared up as a native threw on loose leaves. The light reached us. I saw Anderson with a gun in each hand.

"Give me a gun," said Pettengill.

"Cut over for the raft," said Anderson. "Never mind us—we can hold 'em."

"I'd rather stay. I'm a good shot."

"Kid, you've got nerve. But you're to advance human knowledge. Skip out while the skippin's nice and ripe."

"I'll save my bag of specimens and come back." He disappeared in the direction of the rafts.

"Don't come back!" roared Anderson. "Wait for us—and shut up."

ANDERSON began firing. Each gun spat after the other. And this time he was firing to hit his targets. I ripped off a few bullets at the advancing line of rushing headhunters. Now the drums were going strong all up and down the valley.

We saw shadows fall under our fire. The yelling increased to a fury and the dogs were all barking. Women screamed in the trees.

Anderson and I fled. We had made something like fifty yards when I flashed

a light to make sure we were at the place to swing toward the rafts.

Anderson fell. Something in the path tripped him. I threw my light to see what had thrown Anderson. He scrambled to his feet, swearing. Then I made out the figure of Pettengill. He was lying face down, his head toward us, his arms outstretched. His bag of heads was not with him. The professor was on his way back to us when he got speared.

Pettengill's body was pinned to the ground. The bamboo shaft of the spear was sticking straight up and driven through him so the point was deep in the ground. I felt his hand. It was already stiffening. There was no pulse. The point of the spear must have been smeared with quick poison—and it went deep to his vitals.

There was nothing that Anderson and I could do. As I held the light on Pettengill I heard from the jungle to the right the low and musical note of a *sumpitan* discharged at us. I never saw the tiny arrow. Anderson rushed past Pettengill's body. I shut off the light and went on. I heard the swish of a spear that went into the brush to my left, missing me.

We swung off to the left in blackness and crouched, a few feet off the up-hill trail. We were bound to lower ground and the rafts, but we wanted the natives to believe we'd gone up the trail. The booming of the drums, the barking of dogs and the yells of hillmen rushing where they thought we were helped us to cover our movement toward the river.

Naked bodies hurtled past us. Those in the lead were not yelling. The head-hunters passing within reach of our hands moved like a swiftly flowing river in a narrow channel.

After awhile Anderson and I edged down toward the raft. We gathered our gear and rifles and cut the mooring line. We shoved off and the current took us past the point. I used a pole to get into midstream.

The current swung us round and round, but the raft was racing down river. Using the pole as a rudder I managed to avoid the points as we went around the bends. If we had struck shore that frail craft of bamboo and rattan would have cracked up under us and by morning our heads would be smoking over a slow fire—with Pettengill's.

When the sun struck in upon us and we were far down the river near the sea, Anderson checked over our belongings. We had our blanket rolls of factory-made heads—and the sack of genuine heads looted from the head house.

"We'd better throw that sack over board," said Anderson, as he relieved me at the steering pole. "Poor old Pet! He was a good scout, but too educated. Far's I'm concerned, we've advanced human knowledge enough for one night."

"I'll save that canvas sack, anyhow," I said. I emptied it of its contents on the rattan woven floor of the raft. Then I cried out in shocked horror at what I saw on the raft's decking.

"What's eatin' you?" demanded Anderson.

I pointed to a head. It had no piece of cut cord from the top as did the others—it had been hanging by a long black queue.

Anderson peered with startled eyes. "Be damned if that ain't Jim Sing!" he said.

"And look!" I cried, pointing to other heads. "Bannister—and McLaw! Along with Parsees and such he picked up some of our friends."

"Hand me that flask—I need a drink," said Anderson.

Then Anderson handed the flask back to me.

We did not speak again and drifted out of the river into the sea, our raft littered with its amazing cargo.

GERMANY'S DEATH SHIP

By C. A. FREEMAN

This is the personal story of Captain Karl Spindler of the Imperial German navy, who navigated the *Command of Death* through the British blockade in 1916 to bring arms to the Irish revolutionists. The account includes information that newspapers failed to secure, and it shows the thoroughness with which the Germans prepared their mystery ship.

WHEN the German admiralty decided to send a shipment of arms and ammunition to the Irish revolutionists who, Sir Roger Casement stated, would be waiting to receive them, volunteers were called for a "command of death." Hundreds of naval officers responded. Captain Karl Spindler was selected. He selected a volunteer crew of twenty-one men—none over thirty years of age, none married or with dependents. All were willing to die for the German cause.

Their vessel was the *Liebau*, about two hundred and fifty feet in length and twelve hundred tons burden. Originally she had been the *Castro* of the Wilson Line—a British prize. At Wilhelmshaven a small force of workmen toiled at night with the greatest secrecy. The vessel was to be the *Aude* and sail under Norwegian papers. At that time the real *Aude* was in the Mediterranean.

Not a man in the ship's company spoke a word of Norwegian, although Captain Spindler spoke English well. The ship's papers were facsimiles of the originals which had been stolen, brought to Germany, photographed, and shipped back to Norway by secret service operatives. Everything on the ship was Norwegian, with the exception of two German flags, a set of German uniforms, and the cargo. The latter consisted of twenty thousand rifles, ten machine guns and ammunition.

So close might British scrutiny be if the *Aude* were searched, that even the buttons on the crew's garments were of Norwegian manufacture. Germany overlooked nothing. Captain Spindler and his men were not permitted to wear a ring or watch of German origin.

At first it was intended that Sir Roger Casement, the Irish revolutionist, and fifty of his followers then in Germany were to sail on the *Aude*. Captain Spindler had built a secret room. It ran across the ship between decks, at a point just below the bridge, and was concealed by false bulkheads. Access was gained by a manhole concealed in a sofa in the captain's room. The cover was a masterpiece of ingenuity, so closely did it fit.

The room was lighted by flashlights only, so there would be no betraying wires, and the place would be occupied only when danger of a search was imminent. Should the ship be seized by the enemy and the presence of passengers be undetected, a portion of the bulkhead might be opened from the inside, and a surprise attack be staged by the Irishmen.

But at the last moment it was decided that Casement and his Irishmen were not to sail on the *Aude*, and the compartment was used for stowing bombs intended to blow up Dublin Castle. With the bombs were also a number of so-called infernal machines. In case it became necessary to destroy the *Aude*, heavy charges of high explosives were placed in concrete blocks fore and aft.

In order to defeat enemy spies known to be in Germany, the high command let it be known that an expedition to Finland was on foot and that rifles and ammunition were to be sent in advance to the revolutionists there. For weeks the German railroads hauled aimlessly back and forth cases of captured rifles—and the bluff worked.

To perfect the *Aude's* camouflage, Captain Spindler was obliged to dispense

with wireless, a thing he bitterly regretted. Had he possessed radio, the story of Ireland's uprising might have been far different.

The *Aude* slipped quietly out of Wilhelmshaven. She put in at Lübeck, then went to sea again. The adventure was begun.

Far to the north went the *Aude,* turned and doubled back as if coming from the Arctic. She rounded Scotland, keeping well out to sea, then steamed south. The weather grew bad and developed into a terrific storm. Captain Spindler was watching for the island of Rockall, a rock fifty feet high and one hundred and twenty feet square, which would give him his bearings.

Shallows exist for miles around Rockall—great jagged boulders lying just beneath the surface of the water. The German was following the course taken by some of the escaping vessels of the Spanish Armada four centuries ago.

In his charthouse Captain Spindler smiled grimly. He remembered a foggy morning when the *Aude* ran unnoticed for several miles within a thousand feet of a British cruiser—almost convoyed by the enemy. So far the *Himmel Kommando* had done well.

Flying spray lashed the bridge as the captain emerged from the charthouse and through his telescope attempted to pierce the gloom, which even at noon was thick. No sign of the Rockall! A dozen strange thoughts flashed through his brain. And then through the scurrying storm clouds Captain Spindler saw hundreds of sea birds. Their raucous screams could be heard above the howling of the wind. Rockall island was just ahead. Hastily Captain Spindler altered his course.

If the cargo did not shift, the *Aude* could ride out the gale. In the cargo lay the greatest danger, for the munitions of war were placed so that they could be quickly unloaded, and yet be well concealed. Above and around them were piled boxes, barrels, and crates such as might compose a legitimate Norwegian cargo. The *Aude* was topheavy. She rolled and plunged heavily. Tiny port lights with glass an inch and a half thick were smashed in.

"*Himmel Kommando* is right!" roared Spindler to the man at the wheel.

The sailor grinned.

"*Deutschland über Alles,*" was his laconic response.

At four o'clock on the afternoon of Holy Thursday the battered *Aude,* having again slipped through a cordon of British ships, came to anchor in the Bay of Tralee. Here it was planned that Captain Spindler was to receive Sir Roger Casement, who was due to arrive on another German vessel—probably a U-boat. Lack of radio again hampered the *Himmel Kommando.* While Captain Spindler waited anxiously, the revolutionist landed at a point eight miles away, where he was captured. One of the German's cherished letters is one written to him by Casement while on the U-boat, and delivered to Spindler after the war.

At six o'clock on the morning of Good Friday the British patrol boat *Shatter 2nd* came close to the *Aude.* A launch was lowered and into it went a British warrant officer, and six of his men. Captain Spindler received them at the gangway, explaining that he was a Norwegian who had been driven off his course by the storm, and said that because of engine trouble he had limped into the Bay of Tralee.

Everything looked right to the Britisher after he had examined the ship's papers and had downed a few drinks of potent whisky prepared in Germany for the British navy. He wanted to talk of his own experiences during the storm, and Spindler humored him. Drinks were sent to the British seamen on board the *Aude* and to those on the patrol boat as well. Plenty of drinks.

There sat the warrant officer, complacently getting drunk, while beneath his feet lay enough munitions of war to

set Ireland ablaze. Finally, when the German was thinking of offering his visitor a bunk, the Britisher staggered toward the gangway.

"Leave when you are ready," he told Spindler.

"Watch out for U-boats—take a zigzag course!"

The Germans laughed as the *Shatter 2nd* steamed away.

The *Aude* followed soon, hoping to be picked up by a U-boat which could give Captain Spindler further instructions. Late that afternoon off Fastnet the *Aude* found itself ringed by twenty-nine British vessels. The cruiser *Bluebell* at once signaled to the *Aude* to proceed to Queenstown. Evidently the German's mission was suspected; and Spindler knew that once in Queenstown harbor he was lost.

He obeyed the command and, steamed slowly toward the port. During the night all preparations were made to keep England from getting those guns even if it meant death. German ensigns lay ready to hoist, and German uniforms ready to be donned.

Four men besides Spindler were to remain on the ship until the last. The others would take a chance in the boats which it was fully expected the British would sink.

At nine o'clock on Saturday morning the *Aude* entered the channel of Queenstown harbor just behind the *Bluebell*. A German bugle rang out. Up went the German battle ensigns to replace the neutral flag of Norway. German uniforms were donned. The masquerade was over!

"Down on your bellies!" thundered Spindler through his megaphone.

The Germans flattened out, raising themselves slightly on hands and toes to lessen the shock. An electrician pressed home a plunger. A sullen boom! The after mine had exploded, but not that in the forecastle.

"Into the boats!" shouted Spindler Chosen men ran backward and forward with fire bombs. They tossed them into the secret room among the infernal machines—among the cargo over which was piled long mine props of Norway pine. More explosions followed. Slowly the *Aude* settled. Spindler and the rest dropped into the boats. The captain counted. He was one man short. Then Fritz Schmidts, a seaman, came running along the deck clutching the captain's American phonograph. He tossed it to a boat. It fell into the sea. Schmidts jumped and was hauled aboard.

"Too bad," he grunted. "We'll need music in prison!"

But Schmidts was not sure of ever seeing a prison.

Boom! Boom! Twice the British fired.

The German commander directed his men to pull directly for the *Bluebell*. The firing ceased, and as Spindler approached the cruiser he saw many officers on deck. They disappeared, leaving only one officer on the bridge. A group of petty officers ran toward Spindler with rifles at their shoulders.

The German, sure that his time had come, raised a hand toward the officer on the bridge.

"You can kill us all," he shouted, "but Germany will shoot two British officers now in captivity for each of our lives!"

An order was barked and the threatening rifles were lowered. As far as large vessels were concerned, the *Aude* would block the Queenstown channel for six months. The rifles were safe; and that was some comfort to the prisoners.

The *Aude's* crew was lodged in the prison on Spike Island. For Spindler a tour of British prisons was in store. Once he escaped and was recaptured within half a mile of a flying field where he hoped to steal an airplane. Another attempt was nipped in the bud. Finally, when stricken ill, he was interned in Holland until the end of hostilities.

At forty-three the adventurous German is seeking more thrills, devoting the remainder of his life to travel in little known corners of the world.

The Camp-Fire

A meeting place for readers, writers and adventurers

AMONG the men who (1) know how to write and (2) know the subjects they write about, you may list the name of Robert E. Pinkerton, author of the novelette *Just Another Jones* in this issue.

Mr. Pinkerton hasn't been in the East in years, and we've never met him.

And yet the acquaintanceship runs a long way back—back, for example, to the old *Outing*, from which some of his articles on canoe travel and portaging, tents, packsacks and tumpline, were clipped and pasted into a scrapbook as the advice of perhaps the best authority on those subjects.

Mr. Pinkerton's account of himself, which follows, is the story of an interesting and unusual life.

Born in southern Wisconsin, March, 1882. Educated in public schools of Wisconsin. Two years at University of Wisconsin, class of '03. At nineteen began newspaper work in Milwaukee as reporter. Became sporting editor, telegraph editor and feature writer.

I don't doubt but that I would still be in the newspaper game if I hadn't overdone it. After working four years with one week's vacation, something or other happened and a doctor ordered me out of town. Arrangements were made for a job punching cows on a ranch in North Dakota when a friend told of a lonely trapper in northern Wisconsin who was looking for a partner.

Much of my boyhood was spent on a farm and I had ridden horses a great deal and, like all boys, had wanted to be a cow puncher. But I had also hunted and trapped when a youngster and the trapping idea won. The next year was spent just south of Lake Superior and there was a rather complete initiation into north woods life. In addition to trapping there were jobs of sawing, swamping, skidding and hauling logs during the winter, two months of the strenuous but picturesque life on a log drive with a brief period of cooking four meals a day for sixty men, and at last the beautiful, lazy summer of wilderness vagabondage with a canoe and a tent.

It never occurred to me in the fall that this delightful life might be continued, that the glorious fall hunting days could be resumed, that the peculiar gambling zest of a trap line and the splendor of the northern wilderness in winter still lay at hand. But a few months humped over the copy desks of two Chicago newspapers developed a severe attack of what doctors call nostalgia and the Ojibways describe so beautifully as "The sickness of long, long thinking." In the spring I was northward-bound, this time in a birch canoe to the countless lakes lying along the border between Minnesota and Ontario.

Those were the days before forest rangers and game preserves, when a whole day's paddle without a glimpse of anyone except a stray Indian could be followed by many days like it. It was before the day of the "tourist" or city woodsman, of gasoline boats, even of the lumber camp. It was a real frontier with the frontier's peculiar mixture of courage and villainy, of blind-piggers and drug smugglers, of clean, simple fellows who know that civilization has no selvedge, only a soiled, tattered border beyond which they must press. Those were the days too, when a dollar and board were a day's wage; and a week's pay, as I soon learned, would buy enough grub for a month of wandering. There may be a complete lack of purpose in such a life but it has a wealth of enchantment. I quickly became, and for several years remained, a wilderness tramp. There were short periods of remorse and feeble ambition that resulted in brief captivity in newspaper offices but there is a saying that anyone who has ever tasted waters that flow into Rainy Lake will return. I seemed to be devoting my life to proving its truth.

Once when spurring myself to strenuosity in newspaper service I spent my night off seeing Eugene Walter's "The Wolf." The theatre was sprayed with balsam scent. The next morning I was bound northward. I arrived at a trading post with two dollars, all of which went for beer in a blindpig the first night. The next morning I went to work for the fur trader and the next week was off in a canoe for a month alone on the end-

less lakes of Ontario. I sometimes took a job that lasted longer than a week, though always with the understanding that I could quit at the end of seven days. Once the forest service snared me for three months but the red tape became a heavy chain and I slipped out. Again I acquired a partner and a fishing license. We lived alone, the last five weeks without ever speaking, but the partnership was broken because we couldn't get our fish to the railroad, seventy-five miles away. As a defense I might say that in the year I lived with a trapper we never had a misunderstanding or displayed irritation.

On one of my trips out I met a girl who had never seen a canoe, had never slept in a tent, had never caught a fish, had hardly ever stepped off a pavement, and I began to search for a permanent job. In trying to discover what I might do best I did a bit of recapitulating and discovered that in the previous five years I had held forty-two jobs, not counting those to which I returned two or three times. Perhaps the one commendatory thing about that list is the fact that I was never discharged. I really could work very well, for a short time. The list I found was quite varied. I was reporter and trapper, sporting editor and cook in a lumber camp, theatrical press agent and clerk in a fur trading post, telegraph editor and commercial fisherman, Associated Press editor and member of the U. S. Forest Service. Twice ran a magazine, one a sporting journal and the other an anti-tuberculosis organ, and in both cases wrote everything from verses to editorials and ads. Scattered in between these jobs I worked on a ranch, bull-cooked on a log drive, worked as a lumberjack, trapped in Wisconsin, Minnesota and Ontario, read copy on three Chicago papers, guided moose hunters, freelanced among the Sunday papers, drove team on a twenty-six mile portage, turned out some advertising literature and, when there was nothing else to do, built log cabins. There are no less than six scattered through the bush.

The logical thing to do with that past and a matrimonial present was to get one good job and hold it. Yet the day of the wedding I had one small job and a week later I had acquired five more. To hold them all I worked twelve to fourteen hours a day seven days a week—for three months.

The lure of the sea, of the mountains, of the forest or the desert is difficult to explain. Fundamentally, each calls in the same way, to the same thing in men. One gets freedom, but most of all a sense of freedom. He gets conflict, a feel of danger and the constant thrill of the unexpected. At least one could so analyze it, but the man who goes never does. He is conscious only of the summons, just as I was long before those three months ended.

There must have been something very real about that call, or in my response to it, for it won a convert. But it was obvious that the life I had led in the bush was suitable only for one completely unattached person. A job meant being away from home, which was beside the program, and we also wanted to live so far from people there would be no jobs. What we needed was something that would support us and yet permit us to remain at home and by a process of elimination we reached the one possible solution—writing fiction.

It never occurred to us to try it out on safe ground. Youth hates caution and we were thinking most of getting into the north country. So we saved enough for railroad fares and initial equipment and started. As youth does, we proved our wisdom by selling the first story—and living on moose meat and partridges and rabbits and making our own clothes and going without butter for two years. Then we sold the second.

We lived in that cabin five years and saw it grow from one room to six. Our front door faced an uninterrupted forest that ended only with the barren grounds. On three sides our nearest neighbors were sixty miles away. We hunted and fished and took long canoe journeys. We raised and drove sleigh dogs, ran a trap line. Canada was very good to us.

We returned to the States because a young lady would soon need a school but went back the next year for four months at a Hudson's Bay post and a most intimate survey of the lives of those men who have made the great company what it is. We had access to journals of a hundred years in one of the most isolated and primitive posts, heard countless tales from men who had spent a lifetime in the service, understood the fanatical loyalty of those Scotch and English boys who have given themselves to the most remarkable commercial enterprise the world has known.

Once back in the States we found ourselves poorly fitted for an orderly existence. We had left Canada with the idea of living on a motor boat and cruising the length of the Atlantic coast and when that had to be postponed we bought a car and started west, traveling much as we did in a canoe, camping, remaining a while, packing up and moving on, always when and where we wished. We lived in the Rockies, in Denver, in the high Sierras. We tried Southern California, for a short time, and Berkeley, and a longing for pines took us to Carmel and our first touch with writers. Now we are on top of one of San Francisco's many hills with the bay and the city spread out before us, with the ships from strange lands swinging into the tide—and with the Pacific calling.

KNOCKOUT in the Sticks strikes us as a really good yarn, and is the first by Eddy Orcutt that *Adventure* has published. He is a newspaper editorial writer in San Diego, California—"a wild, uncultivated region," he says,

"where editorial writers do not wear spats. A man of sedentary habits, my hobbies are sitting and watching baseball, football, boxing, track, polo, motorcycle racing, and all other forms of sport where a peace-loving spectator can get in on an Annie Oakley. I have always harbored a sincere curiosity, though, as to the human angle on the performers who strut their stuff for the customers in the stands—that's where the stories are. And I'm proud of this chance to make my first bow to the men who like *Adventure*."

A GREAT deal of correspondence has come in from the United States and Canada about the old Grenadier March, and now, apparently, the history and words of the old tune have been found. We have the following from Robert Frothingham, the *Ask Adventure* expert on Old Songs:

I am enclosing the manuscript of the old Grenadier March: *The World Turned Upside Down*, about which there has been so much correspondence. This is the only letter, by the way, that apparently tells the real story.

Cordially,
ROBERT FROTHINGHAM.

Los Angeles Museum,
Los Angeles, Calif.

My dear Mr. Frothingham:

In the June issue of *Adventure* in the A. A. section, I noted your request for the words and music of the old Grenadier March *The World Turned Upside Down*,

Now my field is in North American anthropology and I know very little about other matters, but I read a bit here and there and in the January, 1927, issue of the "Journal of the Society of Army Historical Research," London, I came across an article on *The British Grenadiers*, by D. Nichol Smith.

He prints a song therein which is entitled *The British Grenadiers*, the words of which are:

1

Some talk of Alexander and some of Hercules,
Of Conon and Lysander and some Meltiradies
But of all the World's brave Heroes there's none that can compare
With a tow, row, row, row, row to the British Grenadiers,
(repeat)

2

None of those ancient Heroes e'er saw a cannon ball,
Or knew the force of Powder to slay their foes with all,
But our brave boys do know it, and banish all their fears,
With a tow row, row, row, row the British Grenadiers.
(Chorus) But our brave boys, etc.

3

When e'er we are commanded to storm the Palisades,
Our Leaders march with Fuses and we with hand Granades
We throw them from the Glacis about our Enemys' Ears,
With a tow, row, row, row, row, the British Grenadiers.
(Chorus) We throw them, etc.

4

The God of War was pleased and great Bellona smiles
To see these noble Heroes, of our British Isles
And all the Gods celestial, descending from their spheres
Beheld with admiration the British Grenadiers.
(Chorus) And all the Gods celestial, etc.

5

Then let us crown a Bumper and drink a health to those,
Who carry Caps and Pouches and wear the louped Clothes
May they and their Commanders, live happy all their years,
With a tow, row, row, row, row, the British Grenadiers.
(Chorus) May they and their Commanders, etc.

The music for the song is also given as it was printed on the original broadside "Sung by Mr. Reinhold in *Harlequin Everywhere*. This *Harlequin Everywhere* was the subtitle of a burletta pantomime produced Nov. 30, 1779, at Convent Garden and later in December of the same year as *Harlequin Everywhere* and on into March of 1780 under the same title.

It would appear from other discussion in the same article that the music for this song was the same as that of the "Grenadier's March" which had been played by British military bands for several centuries, the precise origin of which yet remains in doubt. According to one footnote in the article, *The British Grenadiers* is stated to be "founded on an air of the sixteenth century . . . words about 1690."

It seems to me, somewhere, I can't recall exactly, I have read of the British Army after a surrender of its arms, marching out to the tune of *The World Turned Upside Down*. Wasn't it Yorktown?

However, trusting this may be of some interest to you and as one A.A. man to another, I wish you success in your quest for your lost song.

Sincerely yours,
ARTHUR WOODWARD.

F. LEONARD MARSLAND, a reader who went to Antarctica and had two Emperor penguins "Maggie" and "Minnie" (eaten on Christmas and New Year's Day respectively), adds some more information to the discussion of these odd birds. Mr. Marsland has been appointed to the *Ask Adventure* staff as an expert on Antarctica.

Greenwich, King's Co.,
Nova Scotia, Canada.

Might I offer a few additional facts, gained by personal observation, to Mr. Quinn's answer in the July issue to the query regarding penguins?

Concerning the Emperor penguin of record size mentioned by Mr. Quinn, while I was serving on an Antarctic expedition in 1929 we caught, on Kerguelen Island, one weighing 84 lbs. and standing 3 ft. 8 ins. high. This was a magnificent bird with a back of pure silver colour, a broad orange band around the neck and a most amiable disposition. He (or she) was one of a pair we captured about five miles inland (but not more than half a mile from one of the numerous fiords in that island) and took aboard the ship. The pair lived on deck for about a month, and then the larger was killed for Xmas dinner, the other serving in a like capacity on New Year's Day. The flesh was rather like very fine quality moose meat, but a shade darker, and with not the slightest taste of fish. During their stay on the ship we found the food most to their taste was canned tomato, bread soaked in undiluted, sweetened condensed milk, and dough. Neither of them would touch the marine monstrosities we caught in the deep sea trawl.

Mr. Quinn, so far as he goes, is of course absolutely right concerning their diet and nesting habits, but in the Antarctic proper both of these differ greatly from those of the penguins further North.

Trawling every day, except when weather conditions prevented, at depths ranging from 1,500 fathoms to the surface, we found absolutely no fish at depths less than 50 fathoms and it is inconceivable that the birds could dive to this depth and hunt for food. Also, there is the fact that neither "Maggie" or "Minnie" would touch the fish we offered.

Their chief food, it appears, is "krill," a form of plankton, pink in colour, which exists in great numbers in the Antarctic. This plankton forms the principal article of diet of the whales, and where it is found there will be whales, sea leopards (who prey on the penguins), and penguins of all varieties. We saw numerous floes covered with penguin droppings, tinted, by this, to a deep shade of pink.

The nesting habits of the penguins deep in the Antarctic differ radically from those mentioned by Mr. Quinn. There, where there is no bare earth (except mountains too steep for the snow to settle on) and, of course, no twigs, etc., an ingenious method of hatching has been evolved. The female, on laying the egg, shuffles it around until it rests on her feet. She then slumps her body down until the egg is covered with feathers. The male takes his spell at this, and so they keep it warm until the egg is hatched. Until the young one is sufficiently vigorous to enter the water, it, too, is kept in this position.

The cry of the birds we heard sounds like a long drawn out "Caw" such as a crow gives, but of much longer duration than that of a crow. Guessing, I should say it lasts from three to four seconds.

Mr. Quinn is not quite right in describing their method of progress over the snow. On ice floes (which, in the Antarctic, are only compressed snow) and snow, they, both Emperor and the smaller varieties, can move much faster than a man can run by lying on their bellies and paddling with their flippers (or wings, as they once were). When proceeding in this manner the feet are used for steering, and, when going slowly, for propulsion. In the water their speed is tremendous, approximating, I should think, that of a porpoise. They can outdistance any Common Seal, Ross Seal or Sea Leopard, but they are caught by this latter animal diving and coming up under them, when they are swimming slowly on the surface.

When they wish to land on a steep-sided floe they merely accelerate when they are about thirty or forty feet from it, and, depending on the height of the floe, leave the water at a distance from it and shoot through the air with the momentum gained. They land neatly on both feet in an upright position. I have seen them land on floes with a side at least five feet in height, in this manner.

When swimming slowly they keep their heads above water, and will frequently follow a ship for miles through the ice pack. It it not for scraps of food thrown over that they do this, because they give these no attention. Possibly they imagine the ship is a whale, and where whales are, so is krill.

Their wings are covered with minute feathers, each slightly larger in diameter than the head of a pin. These are quite hard, and resemble scales more than feathers.

Certain varieties should be obtainable fairly cheaply from the South Island, New Zealand, or from Tasmania or Victoria, Australia, but I doubt if the Emperor, (which is a truly regal bird) would come so far North as these places.

They should make excellent pets, if they could stand the summer of America. Both "Maggie" and "Minnie," before their regretable demise, displayed some intelligence, and had many amusing tricks. Unless deliberately provoked their temper is excellent at all times. "Maggie," especially, delighted in being led by the flipper, as a small child would be by the hand, along the deck, and

hopped over small obstructions such as ropes, steam pipes, etc., in a manner strongly reminiscent of Mr. Chaplin at his liveliest.

Trusting the above may be of some interest to Mr. Bermingham, who made the request for information, and with all good wishes for more and bigger "Adventures."

SNAKES seem to have about as much fascination for readers (editors, too) as they do for birds. Follow two brief letters of general interest about the fer-de-lance and the rattlesnake:

San Francisco, Calif.

I spent two weeks on the island of St. Lucia, in the West Indies, when the ill-fated "Vestris" put in there in 1919 with its No. 2 hold on fire. Over 400 passengers were landed while the fire was being put out, wandered around through the jungle in their bathing suits, yet only a few years before the fer-de-lance had been as much of a lurking danger on St. Lucia as it still is on the neighboring island of Martinique.

Because there were no more fer-de-lance to conquer, the mongooses (or should one say, mongeese) that had been imported a few years previously themselves had become a pest. They sprang up from the scenery in front of our Model-T Fords like jack-rabbits, and had become weaned from a diet of snakes to one of chicken.

Look into the St. Lucia records, and don't say as you recently did that the mongoose has always proved ineffective to combat venomous snakes in this hemisphere.

If you think that the matter is worth mentioning, which it probably isn't, kindly do not use my name.

Yours very truly,

Ann Arbor, Michigan

In the March *Adventure* Capt. C. H. Coe brings up the question of rattlesnakes being killed by sunlight. In COPEIA, (the Ichthyologist's and Herpetologist's journal) No. 3, 1933, several conclusive experiments are reported. The species of rattlers used in these experiments were the Texas Diamond-Back, the Side-Winder or Horned Rattler, and the Pacific Rattler. The rattlers all died in from seven to twenty minutes when forced to remain in the direct sun upon the sand. When treated with strong infra-red rays and ultra-violet the snakes were not injured, but when they were put into a chamber and the temperature raised to 122 degrees Fahrenheit they died in less than fifteen minutes. There is no reason to believe that rattlesnakes are killed by any other factor of sunlight than heat, but in the desert the heat on the sand often goes far above 122F. In the cases Captain Coe mentions there is no reason to think that the reptiles were subjected to any such temperature. Rather, he mentioned in two places, "After cool mornings." Furthermore they were not on highly heated sand. Mr. Karl P. Schmidt of *Ask Adventure*, who is one of the world's present foremost herpetologists, is quite able to answer any doubts there may be remaining.

Mr. Friederich of Havana, Cuba, asked in the March issue how to get bones "Clean and white as they are in the museums." This will seldom be done by mere boiling in water. The easiest way, and a very good one for pieces which are not too large is merely to soak them in hydrogen peroxide, or to boil them in it for awhile after the flesh has been mainly removed. It is easier to remove the flesh if it is boiled in an ammonia solution of about 26 per cent. This does not hurt the bones, but does tend to remove the discoloring grease from them. A hill of ants or a bunch of dermestid beetles will help pick bones, but ants will also often eat the cartilage connecting them.

Sincerely,

WILLIAM H. STICKEL.

BILL ADAMS is with us again in the next issue with a yarn called *The Solitary Skipper*. The austere and aloof existence of a windjammer captain at sea is traditional—it's the lonesomest job on earth, says Bill Adams. And why must it be so? A captain asked himself that, knocked a couple of rivets out of his ironclad authority, tried to be more human—not soft, just a human being—and what happened is told in *The Solitary Skipper*.

Bill Adams' stories have a way with them. Look for a plot, in the conventional definition of plot, and you may find it, you may not. Probably Bill Adams never thinks of that word. Into a story he puts the sea—and it's a wet and heaving sea. He puts some men—and being men, they are human, and act and feel as humans do. And he puts a situation or an action that could very well happen—and there it is.

It's by no means the way an architect plans a house. It's the way a natural yarn-spinner works.

H. B.

Ask Adventure

For free information and services you can't get elsewhere.

IN THE races the tall ships run deep with grain and under full sail, they have to watch the farthings—they don't even light the running lights until they are in the steamer lanes.

Request:—I need a little firsthand data about the ships that sail in the "grain race" from England to Australia.

What is: (1) Usual size, number of masts, and rigging. (2) Number of officers, number of men, including steward and cooks. (3) Size of cabin. Do they usually have electric lights? (4) Port of call in England and Australia. (5) Do they ever stop between these ports? (6) Nationality and type of men in the crew.

—K. R. MCALPINE, New York, N. Y.

Reply by Mr. Charles Hall:—The vessels in the so-called "Grain Race" are oldtimers, as this is the last survival of sail in deep water transportation. A number of them are former British ships which were sold to the Scandinavians a good many years ago.

(1) They are usually four-masters, and register some 2,500 to 3,000 tons. The "Olivebank", for example, is 326 feet long, 43 feet wide and 24½ feet depth (from deck to keel, *not* draft of water). Her tonnage is 2,641 gross and 2,818 registered. She carried some 4,500 tons of grain.

(2) Captain, three mates, steward, cook, twenty-two souls aboard all told, to work that big ship from Australia to Europe.

(3) Officers' cabins are somewhere about the size of a small stateroom on an old steamer, a berth, seat, closet and perhaps a small washstand. Usually oil lights.

(4) Sail from some port in Australia, Melbourne or thereabouts, thence to Falmouth for orders and to some port in the United Kingdom or the Continent. No stops between ports unless dismasted or some serious accident.

(5) Crew mostly Scandinavians, young and paid almost nothing. Ships run most economically, not even lighting the sidelights until well into the track of shipping in the North Atlantic.

You might read Claude Muncaster's "Rolling Round the Horn," Charles E. Lauriat, Boston, for the impressions of a landsman who made the voyage. He is a marine artist.

A MAN who has spent much time collecting snakes in Florida wants expert advice on preserving their skins.

Request:—I am interested in preserving snake skins and mounting of snakes. I have spent a good deal of time collecting, studying, and selling the snakes of Florida.

Could you tell me just what to do from skinning to preserving the hides? Have been unable to find out how to stretch the hide correctly and what chemicals to preserve it with. I tacked out the hides on a board and preserved with salt, pepper, and alum. Would then varnish and shellac them upon another board after the skin had dried. It is rather a crude way of doing it, and I thought you might possibly be able to tell me how to make a better job of it.

—HOMER S. RHODE, Coral Gables, Fla.

Reply by Mr. Seth Bullock:—To be perfectly frank, your method of handling snake skins is somewhat crude, as you say, and you will find that you can do it much more quickly and easier by the following procedure.

The snake should, of course, be secured alive if possible, so that the skin will not be damaged in killing. Chloroform should be used to kill. When dead the snake should be cut up the belly from the tip of the tail to within a couple of inches of the head and the skin removed by skinning over the head, inverting the skin as you would a glove, separating the skin entirely from the skull. Then soak in cold water containing a little salt to soak out the blood and squeeze out. Repeat this and rinse thoroughly. Then immerse in a cold solution of carbon tetrachloride for an hour to remove the grease, hang it up for sufficient time for the carbon to evaporate, and then place in peroxide of hydrogen and water, half and half, for a few hours. Rinse with water.

Now make the following solution which will keep indefinitely by adding a little more glue and glycerine as it is used up:

Water, 1 part
Glycerine, 1 part
Carpenter's glue, thin and warm, added

until when cooled to the temperature of the room the solution does not jellify.

Allow skin to remain in this overnight in a warm place. Be sure that you do not put the skin in this solution if it is hot as the skin will shrivel up and be ruined. It should be kept just warm enough to keep the glue from becoming chilled and rubbery.

Next morning, rinse in water, squeeze out, lay it flat on the table and scrape the inside thoroughly to remove any trace of tissue. Rinse and squeeze out again and wipe dry with a piece of soft cloth. Skins treated in this way will keep indefinitely and will remain transparent. Care must be exercised to make sure that the snake is not about to shed its skin, otherwise the scales will be loosened and the skin spoiled. But if the skin is a new one or not to be shed you will have no trouble.

When ready to use, the skin will have to be colored on the inside. "Diamond Dyes" are used for this. Mix with boiling water and strain. Then paint carefully on the underside with an artist's small brush, red on red, etc. Whiting and water will answer for white. In about an hour or two the color will have struck through the skin and will show in the original colors from the outside. It will not be necessary to varnish, nor will it be necessary to stretch them as the above process will result in a soft and thoroughly pliable skin.

A PHYSICAL education director asks advice on grooming boxers at Elmira Reformatory. Here's a practical and helpful training schedule.

Request:—Boxing plays an important role in our recreational program here at Elmira Reformatory. Every Wednesday and Saturday we have twelve rounds of boxing—3 two minute rounds is one bout. Two inmates have left here and won final contests in the Golden Gloves tournaments held annually in New York City. How long do you feel it is advisable for a boxer to train for a bout here? How much time should be allotted for road work, heavy bag, light bag, rope skipping, shadow boxing? How often and for how many round should our men box while training for their events? What general body building exercises are specifically good for boxers—How long before a bout should a man lay off? When should he start again with his training after a bout?

—G. ANDERSON, Elmira, N. Y.

Reply by Capt. Jean Grombach:—I am most interested in your problem. The advice I am going to give you is based on my experience conditioning and training soldiers in the Army for boxing. Not the training of Corps Area or all Army Special duty competitive boxers, but of the ordinary run of soldiers competing in intramural activities—inter-company and inter-battalion competition within the regiments and garrison posts in the regular service.

During your boxing season, I recommend that you fit out a corner of your gym, or a separate room for boxing training. And that you lay out a flexible course of training for your boxers to take or lay off, depending on their condition, fight dates, etc., also on their own particular constitution. Some men, you will find, can train practically all year around without getting too fine or stale while others must lay off a week every month or two weeks every couple of months.

First, men training should do road work, but men like the ones you have who work and exercise all day, should be careful not to overdo road work. Would recommend that you have your men lope or dog trot—possibly walk, one minute, run one minute and sprint one minute, continually repeating the order. Of course this should not be overdone.

Unless you have very young boys, I would change to three minute rounds like the Amateurs, rather than the two minute Intercollegiate rounds.

In your gym or boxing area, at every workout period, I would have some one ring a bell or blow a whistle for rounds and rest periods. Have all training conducted by round and rest periods. This does much, especially for the gaging of time for a last minute spurt at the end of a round, etc. Then I would place a schedule on a wall in a conspicuous place laying out a training period as follows:—

2 rounds limbering up, bending, running, etc.
2 " light bag
2 " heavy bag
2 " shadow boxing
2 " actual boxing
2 " body (floor) work

Except for the beginning and end, the order can be changed to suit convenience of rings available, etc.

With regard to period of training or lay off—for three round fights—from one month to 6 weeks should do for preparation and from two days to a week on lay offs.

AIRPLANES solve the gold question in New Guinea by carrying in dredges that weigh hundreds of tons. It is costly country for a prospector.

Request:—I am interested in the mineral formations of New Guinea. Are there any streams like those in Colorado from which gold may be washed by the placer method?

What about animal life? Much big game, or poisonous reptiles?

—PAUL E. ERHARD, Denver, Colo.

Reply by Mr. L. P. M. Armit, Port Moresby, Territory of Papua, Australia:—New Guinea is the second largest island in the world; it is in the southern tropic, north of Australia, and covers about 308,000 square miles. It is mountainous; the highest range is in the western part of the island, the peaks rising to over 20,000 feet above the seas. In these tremendous highlands there are great glaciers and snowfields. But in the central and the eastern parts of the island the ranges rarely rise above 15,000 feet, so they are free of ice and snow. There are many great rivers, some navigable for several hundred miles from the sea, and there are also many other streams. In fact, New Guinea is a country of rivers, for the rainfall in the interior ranges from fifty to three hundred and more inches a year. Most of the island is covered with dense tropical jungle, but in the highlands there are great tracts of grass lands, pine forests and sparsely treed country.

The climate is very hot and humid in the lowlands, but up high it is cool and pleasant.

There are several gold-fields. The largest was found about eight or nine years ago, and it has proved very rich, the output of gold from it for the past year being about $5,000,000. Most of this was dredged, though a good deal came from sluicing claims and also from hard rock mines. There may be other gold-fields in the unexplored territory. There are several thousand square miles that no white man has ever traversed. Miners are gradually pushing further out, and it is quite possible further strikes will be made by them.

Copper has been worked near Port Moresby, but since the low price of this metal, these mines have not been worked.

Traces of nearly every metal and mineral have been found in many parts of the island. Osmiridium has been mined, mostly from the gravel of the mountain streams. At present considerable prospecting is going on in country that has a little platinum in its streams.

Prospecting in the interior is a very costly venture, for every ounce of food, tools, equipment, etc. has to be carried on the backs of native porters. Since aerial transport has begun here, the transport has been greatly simplified, but it is still very costly. There are over thirty landing-fields for aeroplanes in the interior, and from these fields the prospectors draw their stores. The aeroplane has been a wonderful agent in opening up the country, for it has enabled the miners to enter country and remain there, fed by the planes, which would have been impossible with ordinary methods of transport. The great dredges, weighing hundreds of tons, have been carried into the interior, piece by piece, and all without accidents to the machines or the airmen, barring one machine which was smashed against a mountainside during a spell of foggy weather.

In the early days of the Morobe Gold-field all transport was done by native porters, who, of course, were able to carry only about forty pounds weight per man, the journey from the coast to the gold-camps taking about ten or twelve days' hard hiking up and down rain-soaked mountains. But when the aeroplanes arrived this journey was cut down to about fifty minutes from the coast to the mines. And with this quick and efficient transportation the field rapidly developed, until now there are huge dredges working on that field. All other machinery, material for houses, motor cars, cattle, horses, everything in fact, is taken in by the air route. Where you now see flourishing settlements, there was formerly only thick jungle; and the transformation has been entirely due to the aeroplane. Great tri-motored machines fly regularly from the coast to the mines, and smaller aircraft carry to the prospectors a hundred or more miles further out in the ranges all the supplies they need.

The jungles are, fortunately, free of dangerous animals, the wild hog being the largest animal. There are many venomous snakes in the country, but they are not very often seen, for they usually avoid the traveller as he makes his way through the forest. Centipedes, scorpions and spiders are very numerous, but they are not dangerous though their bites are painful. The bird life in the jungles is very plentiful, for New Guinea has a great variety of birds, of which the most beautiful are the Paradise Birds. They are many different species of these birds, and every one of them is gorgeously plumed, but their destruction is prohibited by the law. And besides the Paradise Birds there are many other pretty birds—cockatoos, parrots, parrakeets, pigeons, doves and others. In the swamps there are all kinds of water-fowl—ducks, geese, waders, divers and others. The rivers hold a multitude of crocodiles, the big man-eaters that so many thrilling tales are based on.

The country is not very healthful for malaria is prevalent all the year, but with proper care and attention to housing, the white man can live here quite well.

In case you are thinking of coming to New Guinea to find a job, I must tell you that employment is very hard to find, for there are already more men here than there are jobs. Living is expensive here, so unless you have plenty of money—and you will need a lot—I would not advise you to come this way.

SOURDOUGH'S a staff of life, a leaven, and it's filled many an aching void!

Request:—What is sourdough made of? What varieties are there?

—W. BASSETT, Norwood Park, Ill.

Loring, Alaska.

Reply by Mr. Victor Shaw:—So far as my information goes (and I've made and used

it for many years) there is but one basic method of making sourdough for cooking purposes, although there are many ways of using it, when made. It all depends upon starting a ferment, or "yeast plant," which is a vegetable growth and keeps growing if the nucleus is kept at a medium warm temperature—not too hot, and not too cold. Either will kill it, overnight.

To start it, the easiest way is to use ordinary yeast. Use from ½ cake to whole cake depending on quantity desired; break up in cup of warmish water. Then mix a quantity of flour (say, a quart to ½ cake of yeast) into a medium thin sponge with warm water, adding salt and (to above amount) about ½ cup of white sugar. It helps also if you add a medium boiled potato well mashed and using the potato water to mix flour. Then add the yeast solution, and be careful not to get the sponge *too* thin. Should be a medium thin paste. Set at the back of the stove, or in warmish place over night. Can be used next morning, but is best the second morning. It should swell like raised bread, filled with bubbles, and smell and taste a pleasant sour.

To use (for pancakes, or bread): take out what you wish to use, always leaving a cupful or two to keep your sourdough going. Then mix with more flour, salt if necessary, also if you wish a beaten egg and a bit of milk to make cakes very rich, *beat well* into foamy batter. For bread, use same method but mix flour more dry into light biscuit sponge, mould into biscuits, or into small loaves and place in well greased pan to bake in a quick hot oven. For bread or biscuits, better set to rise before baking.

Should keep sourdough in a glass, or better in a stone jar with a wide mouth. Never put back extra sponge into sourdough. (I neglected in above to add that you *use ½ level teaspoon of baking soda*). Placing the left-over sponge back in sourdough jar tends to neutralize it. Also the milk, if used, or eggs, etc., will spoil. Keep sourdough jar covered.

Can make the best buckwheat cakes by using ½ white and half buckwheat flour in your sourdough jar. Handle same manner, and be sure in all cases to add more flour after using, adding bit of salt and tablespoon sugar each time. The sugar keeps the ferment working better. Have to gauge the amount of soda used by experience; if too much, lessen amount. Sourdough *can* be started in camp with only spuds, salt and sugar, keeping warm for a few days as it takes longer to start the ferment.

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